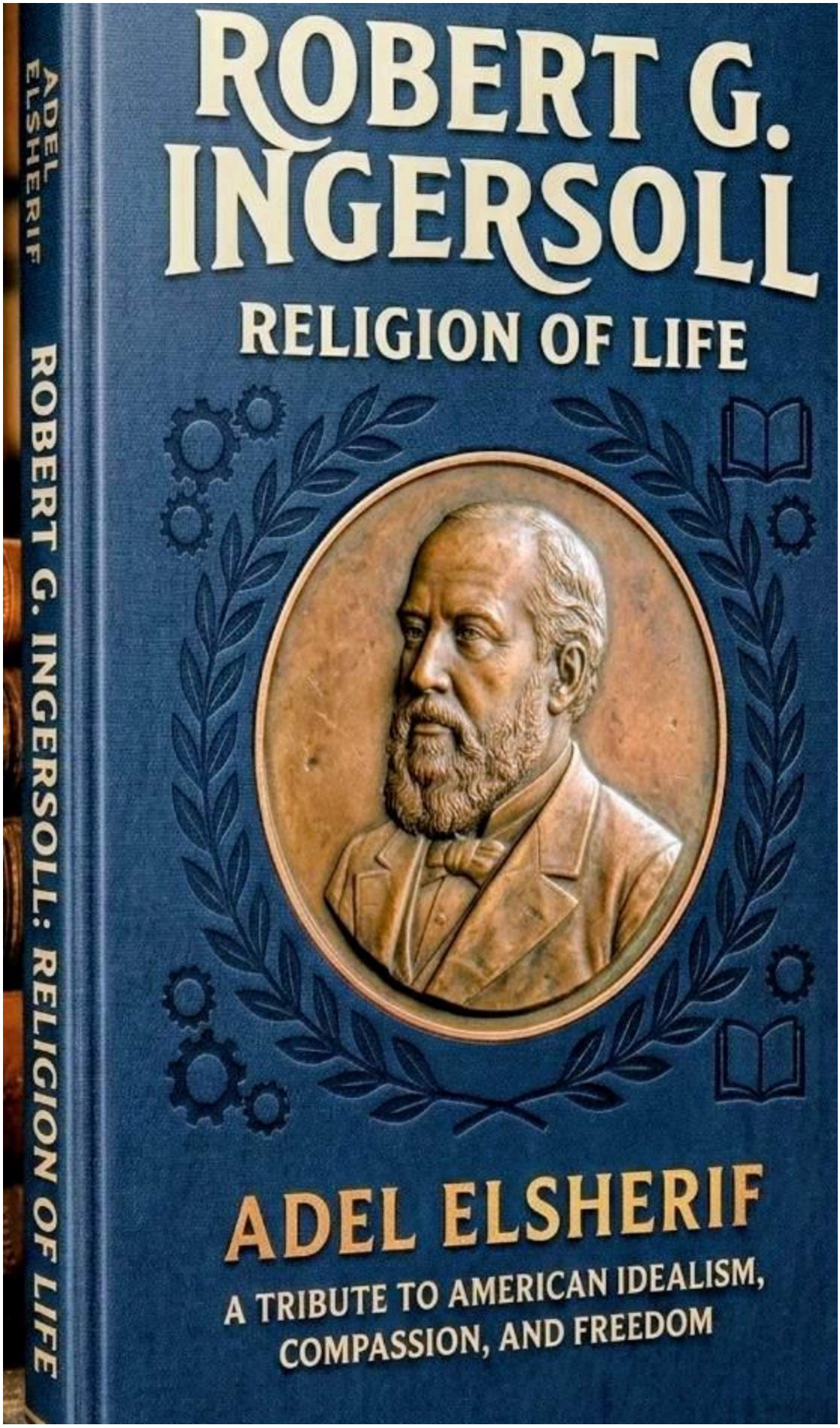
ADEL ELSHERIF
ROBERT G. INGERSOLL: RELIGION OF LIFE
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ADEL ELSHERIF
A TRIBUTE TO AMERICAN IDEALISM, COMPASSION, AND FREEDOM

Robert G. Ingersoll: Religion of Life

Adel Elsherif

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Prefece

This book is a tribute to a man whose voice once thundered across lecture halls with a message that still resonates: that one can reject religion and supernaturalism, and yet live with profound love, humility, and moral conviction.

Robert G. Ingersoll was not merely a critic of religion, he was a champion of humanity.

He was an Idealistic Agnostic, a rare figure whose skepticism was not cold or clinical, but warm, poetic, and deeply rooted in compassion.

Unlike many modern atheists and agnostic figures like Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, and Sam Harris, whose critiques often lean toward materialism and reductionism, Ingersoll's worldview was expansive and emotionally rich.

Where others might reduce love to hormones or morality to evolutionary utility, Ingersoll elevated these human experiences to sacred heights.

He believed that "the brain wants light, the heart wants love," and he never lost sight of either.

Ingersoll was not a scientist or academic debating in televised forums. He was a writer, a lawyer, and a masterful orator, an artist of ideas.

His agnosticism was not a void, but a foundation for a life centered on justice, kindness, and joy. He embraced the American idealism that gave rise to Lincoln and Roosevelt, and in many ways, he embodied the spirit of the American dream: liberty of conscience, equality before the law, and the pursuit of happiness.

His patriotism was not blind allegiance, but a principled love for a country he believed could be better. "I think the best patriot is the man who wants his country to do right," he said, and he gloried in the fact that the U.S. Constitution was the first to divorce church from state, a monumental step toward human progress.

Ingersoll's lectures are filled with evidence of his belief in the nobility of human nature. He wrote, "I believe in love and home, and kindness and humanity. I believe in good fellowship and cheerfulness, in making my wife and children happy." These are not the words of a cold rationalist, but of a man whose agnosticism was infused with warmth and hope.

He rejected the gods not only through critical thinking, but through a higher idealism, one that rose above the dogmas of religion and embraced the moral beauty that religion often claimed as its own.

He understood that “real religion with me is a thing not of the head, but of the heart; not a theory, not a creed, but a life.”

Ingersoll’s reflections on love and death are among the most moving in the history of freethought. He wrote, “The idea of immortality... was born of human affection, and it will continue to ebb and flow... as long as love kisses the lips of death. It is the rainbow Hope, shining upon the tears of grief.” This is not materialism. This is poetry. This is idealism.

He once said, “I would rather be annihilated than to be an angel... and yet have within my breast a heart that could be happy while those who had loved me in this world were in perdition.” In that single sentence, he placed love above salvation, empathy above eternity.

There are surprisingly few books about Ingersoll, despite how modern and relevant his ideas remain.

This short volume aims to reintroduce him, not just as a critic of religion, but as a moral visionary. It is possible to reject supernaturalism and still be full of love, understanding, and hope. Ingersoll proved that. The names from this interview where he said the creed of Life, but since creed now has negative meaning,we changed to The religion of Life.

To me, he is more like Shakespeare than Epicurus. He was a lawyer for all people, regardless of belief or politics. He was a patriot, a poet, and a philosopher of the heart. And above all, he was an Idealistic Agnostic.

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1. His critical thinking , creed of life and his Intellectual Genealogy

Robert G. Ingersoll and the Logic of Doubt

Robert G. Ingersoll built his philosophy on the conviction that reason must reign supreme over authority. For him, reason was not merely a tool but “the lamp of the mnd—the only torch of progress.” He rejected the demand for blind faith, insisting that arguments must stand on their own merit, not on the prestige of the person who utters them. In the realm of reason, he declared, there are no monarchs and no serfs—only ideas tested by their own force.

Ingersoll’s method resembled the courtroom. He treated theologians’ “witnesses” with the same scrutiny a lawyer would apply to testimony.

He mocked the habit of invoking famous names instead of arguments, calling it “intellectual toadyism.” He pointed out the inconsistency of citing men like Theodore Parker as witnesses while condemning them as heretics. And he rejected the notion that one must accept an entire book simply because one accepts part of it. To discriminate between the good and the bad, he argued, is the business of every thoughtful reader.

His wit sharpened when he applied ad absurdum. He followed biblical miracles to their logical conclusions, exposing their absurdity. If Noah’s ark rested on Mount Ararat, seventeen thousand feet high, then survival would require miraculous climate changes or food sprouting from glaciers. If Jonah lived inside a whale, then perhaps he perspired, wiped his brow, and rested on the whale’s jaw.

If worlds were created from “omnipotence,” then omnipotence itself must be treated as raw material—an absurdity, since it is only an attribute.

Contradictions within scripture were another target. The harsh justice of “an eye for an eye” clashed with the mercy of “forgive your enemies.” Genesis offered two conflicting accounts of creation, while the gospels disagreed on salvation and resurrection.

Even the divine plan itself seemed riddled with failure: an infinite God conducting “experiments” like Eden or the Flood, knowing in advance they would fail.

For Ingersoll, the deepest divide lay between science and theology. Science thrives on doubt, investigation, and demonstration.

Theology, he argued, thrives on awe, repression, and the extinguishing of the mind's lamp. To doubt and investigate is, in his words, "infidelity." Faith, he said, is only required when a claim is unreasonable. Once explained naturally, a miracle ceases to be miraculous and loses its merit as a test of faith.

Ingersoll's legacy is not anger but clarity.

He dismantled dogma with humor, precision, and the insistence that truth must withstand scrutiny. His essays remind us that critical thinking is not a luxury but a duty: to question authority, to test evidence, to expose contradictions, and above all, to let reason reign

Robert G. Ingersoll: Logic Against the Miraculous

Robert G. Ingersoll dismantled miracles with a framework built on intellectual self-ownership, internal consistency, and the sharp edge of ad absurdum.

For him, reason was "the only torch of progress," a light that must be "enthroned as king" upon every brain. Faith without evidence was not a virtue but a surrender of thought.

He began by exposing the paradox of "reasonable" miracles. Theologians, eager to defend scripture, often tried to make the miraculous sound scientifically plausible. Ingersoll argued that this destroyed the very essence of a miracle. If the flood could be explained naturally, it would cease to be miraculous.

Faith, he insisted, is only required when a story is unreasonable; once it becomes small enough to believe without evidence, it loses its theological value. He mocked attempts to reduce Joshua's command to stop the sun into an "optical illusion," pointing out that such a subterfuge turned divine power into mere legerdemain—and left the day impossibly stretched to thirty-six hours.

His most famous weapon was ad absurdum. He followed biblical claims to their logical conclusions, exposing their absurdity. If the flood were local, why save birds that could simply fly away? If waters covered mountains seventeen thousand feet high, the upper layers would have frozen into sheets of ice.

If Jonah survived in the belly of a whale by constant motion, then one must imagine him perspiring, wiping gastric juices from his face, and resting on the whale's jaw while scanning the horizon for land. He even questioned the logic of divine communication,

asking how a fish only hours old could possibly understand God's commands without instincts or hereditary knowledge.

Ingersoll also applied legal reasoning to the witnesses of miracles. He invoked the rule "false in one, false in all," noting that if the Bible contained contradictions or scientific errors—such as the two conflicting accounts of creation in Genesis—its claim to divine inspiration collapsed.

He insisted that intelligence was of greater value than inspiration, and that no book should be a master. If tales of iron floating or the dead rising appeared in any other text, they would be dismissed as incredible; why should the Bible be exempt?

Finally, he attacked miracles on the grounds of scientific impossibility. Creation from nothing was, to him, as absurd as fiat money.

Omnipotence, he argued, is an attribute, not a raw material from which worlds can be made. He pointed to fossils in ancient rocks as proof that death and disease existed long before Adam, undermining the claim that sin introduced mortality into the world.

For Ingersoll, the conclusion was clear: nature itself is all the God there is.

To think is not dangerous; it is the refusal to think that imperils humanity. Miracles, he declared, are nothing more than the unnatural masquerading as truth.

His essays remind us that the defense of reason requires not only clarity but courage—the courage to laugh at absurdity, to expose contradiction, and to insist that the mind's lamp must never be extinguished

Creed of Life

Robert G. Ingersoll's "Creed of Life" is a philosophy grounded in the supremacy of human reason, the rejection of supernatural authority, and a devotion to the immediate, observable world. Instead of relying on ancient texts or "fiat" truths, he builds his creed upon the logical application of cause and effect to human happiness.

At its heart, Ingersoll's creed declares that happiness is the only good. This is not a selfish pursuit but a social one: "the way to be happy is to make others happy." The happiest person, he insists, is the one who is truthful, merciful, and intelligent—living in harmony with the real conditions of life.

For him, happiness is not deferred to a distant heaven but found in the present moment: "the time to be happy is now, and the place to be happy is here." By shifting attention

from an unproven afterlife to the demonstrable present, he places human welfare above speculative rewards.

The reason, in this creed, is the “lamp of the mind—the only torch of progress.” Ingersoll urges us not to extinguish that light in favor of dogma, but to increase it. Intelligence, he argues, is of more value than inspiration, and reason stands above all religion.

Within the realm of reason, there are no monarchs and no serfs—only arguments tested by evidence, regardless of who speaks them.

A central pillar of his creed is intellectual self-ownership. Each person must be the “intellectual proprietor of himself,” enthroning reason as king upon every brain. Books should never be masters; instead, individuals must discriminate between what is good and what is bad in what they read.

This insistence on intellectual hospitality is a call to independence of thought.

Ingersoll also emphasizes personal responsibility. Every man must bear the consequences of his own actions: if he puts his hand in the fire, his hand must be smart, not another’s. Each man must eat the fruit of the tree he plants.

This natural logic stands in opposition to doctrines of forgiveness that allow people to escape the settling of their own accounts.

Finally, Ingersoll places humanity above superstition. Since there is no evidence that God has ever interfered in human affairs, people must rely on themselves. Human intelligence must feed the hungry, human compassion must clothe the naked, and science must discover the laws of health and progress. “Cleanliness,” he quipped, “was far better than godliness.”

Ultimately, Ingersoll’s creed is a call for intellectual honesty. “It is dangerous not to think,” he warned, and infidelity—by which he meant the courage to doubt and investigate—preserves the manhood of man. His “Creed of Life” is not a set of dogmas but a framework for living: a philosophy that enthrones reason, embraces responsibility, and seeks happiness here and now.

The Intellectual Genealogy of Robert G. Ingersoll

Robert G. Ingersoll’s political outlook was primarily shaped by Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln, while his philosophical sympathies drew heavily from Voltaire, Alexander von Humboldt, and Charles Darwin, alongside a classical admiration for Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius.

These figures underpin the recurring themes in his interviews and lectures: liberty, secularism, scientific empiricism, and moral courage.

Political Foundations

Thomas Jefferson: Ingersoll famously preferred “Jefferson’s coat” to Andrew Jackson’s, signaling a clear allegiance to Jeffersonian ideals of reason, individual liberty, and the strict separation of church and state.

Abraham Lincoln: When asked to choose between William H. Seward and Lincoln, Ingersoll chose the latter, valuing Lincoln’s practical morality and his steady leadership during the American Civil War.

Andrew Jackson: While Ingersoll acknowledged Jackson as a "brave man" and a "patriot," he regarded him as a failure in theological and moral leadership, often using him as a foil to highlight Jefferson’s intellectual superiority.

Philosophical and Scientific Catalysts

Voltaire: Ingersoll credited Voltaire with doing more for human liberty than “all the orthodox ministers living and dead.” He adopted Voltaire as his model for using wit and relentless critique to dismantle clerical power.

Alexander von Humboldt: Praised for his encyclopedic understanding of the natural world, Humboldt represented for Ingersoll the triumph of observation over revelation. Ingersoll often remarked that Humboldt knew more about nature than the world's combined clergy.

Charles Darwin: Ingersoll viewed Darwin as the preeminent thinker of the age. Darwin’s work provided the scientific bedrock for Ingersoll’s conviction that natural explanations are superior to theological dogma.

Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius: From antiquity, Ingersoll singled out Epictetus as a pinnacle of human character and Marcus Aurelius as a model sovereign. Their Stoic emphasis on self-mastery and duty resonated deeply with Ingersoll’s own ethical framework.

Thematic Synthesis

Ingersoll’s public voice was a sophisticated blend of Jeffersonian republicanism, Lincolnian gravity, Voltairean satire, and the empirical rigor of Humboldt and Darwin.

Jefferson provided the blueprint for a secular public order.

Lincoln embodied the preservation of democracy through moral strength.

Voltaire provided rhetorical weapons to fight orthodoxy.

Humboldt and Darwin offered a worldview grounded in evidence rather than faith.

The Stoics provided the personal ethical standard for a life lived without the promise of an afterlife.

The Effect of Epicurus and Stoics on his religion of Life.

The philosophical identity of Robert G. Ingersoll represents a sophisticated synthesis of two traditionally opposing schools of thought: Stoicism and Epicureanism. By weaving the iron discipline of the Stoic with the vibrant joy of the Epicurean, Ingersoll constructed a unique framework for secular humanism that he termed the "Religion of Life." This worldview was not merely a reaction against the religious dogmas of the nineteenth century, but a proactive architecture for human excellence.

To understand Ingersoll as the "Hedonist Stoic" is to recognize how he utilized ancient logic to solve the modern problem of finding meaning in a world without divine intervention.

The structural backbone of Ingersoll's thought was undeniably Stoic. He held a profound, public admiration for classical figures such as Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, whom he regarded as higher exemplars of character than any Christian saint or sovereign.

This alignment was rooted in the Stoic belief that morality is an inherent human capacity achievable through the supremacy of reason. Ingersoll famously insisted that reason should be "enthroned as king," viewing it as the only legitimate torch of progress. From the Stoics, he inherited a sense of radical personal responsibility and intellectual self-ownership. He maintained that every individual must be the sole proprietor of their own mind, standing unmoved by the social or religious pressures of the crowd. This Stoic resilience allowed him to endure the vitriol of the Church and the "illogical" attacks of the Marxists with a calm, rational mastery.

However, while Stoicism provided the ethical discipline, Epicurus provided the ultimate purpose. Ingersoll diverged from the strict Stoic path by rejecting the idea that virtue is its own reward or that emotions should be suppressed through detachment. Instead, he embraced the Epicurean conviction that happiness is the only good. He transformed the "Passive Atheism" his critics feared into a vibrant, present-centered reality, asserting that the time to be happy is now and the place to be happy is here. Unlike the Stoic who

might seek a life of indifferent austerity, Ingersoll found sacredness in the tangible delights of human existence: the warmth of the family hearth, the beauty of art, and the pleasure of intellectual discovery. For him, virtue was not a cold end in itself but the essential instrument used to cultivate a life of joy.

2.His early life and his Education

On August 11, 1833, in the quiet village of Dresden, New York, a child was born who would one day challenge the moral and intellectual foundations of his time with unmatched eloquence and compassion.

His name was Robert Green Ingersoll, and though he came into the world in a deeply religious household, he would grow to become a radiant voice for reason, joy, and human dignity.

A Family of Conviction

Robert was the son of John Ingersoll, a Presbyterian minister whose radical abolitionist views often put him at odds with his congregations.

The elder Ingersoll’s frequent relocations and clashes with church authorities exposed young Robert to both the power and peril of religious conviction. These early experiences planted the seeds of skepticism that would later blossom into a philosophy of freedom and kindness.

Robert G. Ingersoll’s mother was Mary Livingston Ingersoll.

While she passed away when Robert was only two years old, she was a woman of notable conviction and intellectual spirit. Her "work" was primarily as a devoted partner in her husband's ministry and a mother, but she is most remembered historically for her political activism.

Robert often spoke of traveling with his family and held deep affection for them.

His brother, Ebon C. Ingersoll, played a significant role in his life and career, and Robert’s tribute at Ebon’s funeral remains one of his most moving orations.

Love and Legacy

In 1862, Robert married Eva A. Ingersoll, a woman he described as “without superstition.”

Their marriage was a partnership of intellect and affection, and together they raised children who would carry forward his legacy.

His daughter Eva Ingersoll-Brown and grandson Robert G. Ingersoll Brown are among those remembered in his writings and dedications.

Soldier, Lawyer, Orator

During the American Civil War, Ingersoll served as a colonel in the 11th Illinois Cavalry, fighting at the Battle of Shiloh.

After the war, he built a successful law career and was appointed Attorney General of Illinois. But it was his oratory, his thunderous, poetic lectures on religion, science, and liberty, that made him a household name.

He delivered over 1,500 lectures, often to crowds in the tens of thousands.

A Life of Joy and Reason

Ingersoll’s philosophy was rooted in humanism, secularism, and Epicurean joy.

He rejected fear-based religion and championed a morality based on kindness, reason, and personal freedom.

His most famous works include Some Mistakes of Moses and Why I Am Agnostic, and his words still resonate with those who seek truth without superstition.

Robert G. Ingersoll's Education: A Legacy That Still Resonates

Robert G. Ingersoll's education was shaped by early religious instruction and a lifelong commitment to self-education.

His intellectual journey helped form his distinctive views and continues to inspire modern conversations about learning and personal growth.

Early Life and Religious Background

Ingersoll was born into a deeply religious household, the son of a New School Presbyterian minister.

His skepticism toward doctrines like eternal punishment began forming during childhood, even as he listened to his father's teachings.

He once recalled a "dim recollection of hating Jehovah when I was exceedingly small."

These theological debates continued between father and son for years. Before his father's death, Ingersoll had rejected the idea of eternal punishment and the notion of life as a probationary period. He came to believe that God was almost as good and generous as he was himself.

Views on Formal Education

Ingersoll was critical of traditional academic institutions.

He believed that much of what was taught in colleges was either useless or harmful.

He questioned the value of studying dead languages, especially for those pursuing success in business, and argued that colleges often suffered under the influence of theologians.

His vision for education was ambitious and inclusive.

He imagined a system with excellent schools in every state, a free state university for deserving scholars, and ultimately a free national university that would be the finest in the world.

He advocated for substantial investment in intellectual development, including well-stocked libraries and schools of design.

Practical education was central to his philosophy. He believed young people should be taught skills they could use and sell, preparing them to navigate the world with confidence.

He supported manual training schools and the kindergarten system, emphasizing the importance of learning to use one's hands and turning ideas into tangible results. Ingersoll saw poetry not only in words and colors but also in working with iron and wood.

Self-Education and Genius

Ingersoll held that many educated individuals never attended college. He believed that every observant, thoughtful person continues educating themselves throughout life.

To him, people were more valuable than books, and observation was a powerful teacher.

For those with genius, he felt that formal education was unnecessary.

The world itself was their university, and every person they met was a book, every experience a source of illumination.

He cited Shakespeare as someone who embodied this idea. Nature, he believed, whispered secrets to geniuses that others could not hear.

He also suggested that generations of ignorance could create a hunger for knowledge from which genius is born.

He admired lifelong learners like Abraham Lincoln, who never completed formal education but remained curious and engaged throughout life.

Ingersoll even speculated that if Shakespeare had graduated from Oxford, he might have become a quibbling attorney or a hypocritical person. He saw himself as a product of his environment, shaped by every circumstance that touched him.

Recommended Readings for Intellectual Development

For those with limited time and cultural exposure who wished to develop their intellect and character, Ingersoll recommended a wide range of authors and works.

In science and philosophy, he pointed to Darwin, Ernst Haeckel, John William Draper, Henry Thomas Buckle, William Lecky, Voltaire, Ludwig Büchner, Morrison Waite, Thomas Paine, and Baron d'Holbach. In literature, he placed Shakespeare above all others, but also praised Robert Burns, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Charles Dickens, and Victor Hugo.

Enduring Legacy

Ingersoll’s journey from religious upbringing to outspoken advocate for self-directed learning and practical education remains strikingly relevant.

His emphasis on intellectual freedom, the power of observation, and the transformative potential of science and literature continues to resonate today. His ideas challenge us to think critically, live curiously, and pursue knowledge not just through institutions, but through life itself.

He died on July 21, 1899, in Dobbs Ferry, New York, but his ideas live on quietly, defiantly, beautifully.

3.Gods Are Man-Made

Gods as Human Reflection.

In Volume One of his work, Robert Ingersoll explores the provocative idea that gods are not divine revelations but human inventions, reflections of their creators and the societies that shaped them.

He describes Gods as:

"An Honest God is the Noblest Work of Man,"

encapsulates this belief with striking clarity.

Ingersoll argues that each nation fashioned its own god, and these deities invariably mirrored the traits, prejudices, and desires of their creators.

Gods adopted the hatreds and loves of their worshippers and were consistently found on the side of those in power.

They were imagined in grotesque and fantastical forms, some with a thousand arms, a hundred heads, or necklaces of living snakes.

They wielded clubs, swords, shields, and wings, embodying the violence and mysticism of their times.

He writes:

> *"Many gods were jealous, foolish, revengeful, savage, lustful, and ignorant,"*

Often relying on their priests for information.

Their ignorance was so profound that they didn't even know the shape of the worlds they supposedly created, believing them to be flat. Some thought the sun could be stopped to lengthen the day, or that horns could bring down city walls.

These gods condemned reason, observation, and experience as sins, and were described as:

> *"deficient in geology and astronomy and miserable legislators and executives."*

Their demands were equally harsh. They required "abject and degrading obedience," insisting that people humble themselves in the dust.

They favored their creators, aiding them in acts of robbery, destruction, and conquest.

Nothing pleased them more than the "butchery of unbelievers," and nothing enraged them more than the denial of their existence.

Ingersoll notes that gods were created with such ease and so little substance that

"The god market was fairly glutted, and heaven was crammed with these phantoms."

These deities were imagined to meddle in all human affairs, from the fall of a sparrow to the motion of planets.

They descended to earth to offer instructions, sometimes trivial, such as how to cook a goat or how a priest should wear an apron.

Ingersoll finds the origin of gods and devils to be a "perfectly natural production," born of human imagination and likely to be recreated under similar conditions.

Man models gods after himself, giving them human features and languages, along with the same historical, geographical, and astronomical errors.

No god, he insists, was ever more advanced than the nation that created him.

He points to examples like black-skinned deities for Africans, yellow-complexioned ones for Mongolians, and the patient faces of Egyptian gods—all reflections of their worshippers.

Common people often mistook carved or painted images for the gods themselves.

The dominance of male deities, Ingersoll suggests, stems from man's physical superiority over woman; had the reverse been true, the rulers of nature would have been female.

All human ideas, God, the devil, heaven, and hell, are shaped by the environment and experiences of those who conceive them.

Man exaggerates, diminishes, combines, and distorts reality to create these divine figures, but cannot invent beyond nature.

Ingersoll concludes with a stark observation:

"In the vast cemetery, called the past, are most of the religions of men, and there, too, are nearly all their gods."

He declares that "the gods created by the nations must perish with their creators.

" They were created by men, and like men, they must pass away."

The deities of one age become "the by-words of the next," and intelligent men now understand that :

"all religions and sacred books are made by men, and gods and devils are phantoms."

Ultimately, Ingersoll insists that gods and devils were born not of divine truth, but of ignorance, fear, and cunning.

4.Skepticism Against Prophets

Robert G. Ingersoll’s critique of the biblical prophets centers on a fundamental rejection of their character, their scientific competence, and the deliberate ambiguity of their language.

To Ingersoll, the prophets were not divine messengers, but rather "owls, ravens, and croakers"—figures who seemed to revel in the anticipation of disaster and national defeat.

He viewed their work not as a roadmap for humanity, but as a "jugglery of words" designed to fit any historical event after the fact.

By analyzing the prophets through the lens of human psychology rather than divine inspiration, Ingersoll exposed what he saw as a deep-seated misanthropy at the heart of the prophetic tradition.

The character of the prophets, according to Ingersoll, was defined by a pervasive and dark pessimism.

He famously labeled Jeremiah as the "most accomplished croaker of all time," noting that his writings were so saturated with curses that it was no wonder the leaders of his time held him in contempt. Ingersoll pointed out the bitter irony that when Jerusalem was eventually sacked, the Babylonians released Jeremiah, suggesting that the prophet’s constant predictions of doom made him more of an ally to the enemy than a patriot to his own people.

This theme of "prophetic displeasure" extended even to Jonah, whom Ingersoll ridiculed for becoming angry when Nineveh was spared. To Ingersoll, this revealed a disturbing truth: the prophet was more invested in the accuracy of his own dark predictions than in the salvation of his fellow men. He saw this same spirit in modern ministers who seemed personally aggrieved when the famines or plagues they prophesied failed to materialize.

Beyond their temperament, Ingersoll mocked the glaring scientific ignorance of the "inspired" writers.

He argued that while these figures were busy predicting the downfall of kings, they failed to offer a single piece of practical information that could actually benefit the human race.

They provided no laws of health, no cures for disease, and no understanding of the natural world.

He noted with characteristic wit that Joshua was no "inspired astronomer" and that the "mystic imagery" of Ezekiel—filled with wheels within wheels—conveyed absolutely no usable knowledge to the baker, the builder, or the scientist.

For Ingersoll, if a voice claimed to be divine but could not explain the basic laws of the universe, it was merely the voice of a man lost in a "hieroglyphic" trance.

The power of prophecy, Ingersoll asserted, rested entirely on its ambiguity. He viewed the language of the prophets as a collection of vague symbols and figures that could be stretched to fit the death of a king, the loss of a ship, or the discovery of a new continent.

He argued that in every nation, there are always those who predict ruin; when a nation eventually falls—as all nations do—these "ravens" simply claim their long-standing pessimism was a "fulfillment."

Furthermore, he saw the prophets as active participants in a historical power struggle between the priesthood and the state, using divine curses as a political weapon to threaten any ruler who did not follow the lead of the temple.

Interestingly, Ingersoll found the most profound "doubt" within the Bible itself, specifically citing the Book of Ecclesiastes. He viewed its author not as an inspired prophet, but as a "freethinker" and a "philosopher" who openly questioned the immortality of the soul and the nature of the divine.

Ingersoll turned his critique toward modern theologians who attempted to make these "barbaric myths" seem reasonable. He argued that the moment a miracle is explained away as a "local event" or a "natural phenomenon," it ceases to be a miracle.

By trying to rationalize the prophets, modern defenders were unknowingly allowing the "seeds of infidelity" to germinate in their own minds.

For Ingersoll, the only honest path was to recognize the prophets for what they were: men of their own time, limited by their own shadows, and entirely separate from the clear, steady light of human reason.

Generally,Robert G. Ingersoll held a deeply skeptical and often scathing view of prophets and their revelations.

He saw belief in prophecy not as a sign of spiritual insight, but as a descent into madness and theological speculation divorced from reason and evidence.

To him, the so-called "patriarchs and prophets" belonged to what he called the "barbarous records of a barbarous people", a legacy that modern minds were increasingly weary of.

Ingersoll warned that anyone who seriously believed in prophecies and sought their fulfillment would "go insane."

He mocked attempts to extract future events from biblical visions, such as Daniel's ram with three horns and five tails and his deformed goats, calling such efforts a departure from the realm of fact and law into the fog of theological fantasy.

His criticism of Old Testament prophets was particularly sharp.

He described Isaiah’s writings as filled with "swollen words, vague imagery, prophecies and curses, ravings against kings and nations, laughter at the wisdom of man, and hatred of joy."

Ingersoll concluded that such texts had "not the slightest tendency to increase the well-being of man."

Lamentations, in his view, was merely a continuation of the same "insane pessimist," overflowing with "dust and sackcloth and ashes, tears and howls, railings and revilings."

Ezekiel fared no better; Ingersoll dismissed him as "of no use, of no possible value," and joked that anyone who admired Ezekiel should be forced to dine with him.

His skepticism extended to supernatural interactions.

Reflecting on the biblical story of Saul and the Witch of Endor, Ingersoll highlighted Samuel’s question

"Why hast thou disquieted me, to call me up?" as evidence that Samuel was merely asleep, not summoned from another world.

This interpretation underscored Ingersoll’s disbelief in the supernatural nature of such events.

He rejected the idea of divine inspiration altogether. Ingersoll argued that religious literature, including prophetic writings, was saturated with tales of spirits and angels, yet he firmly believed that no whisper had ever come from any other world.

To him, the concept of inspiration was dangerous, it "enslaves the human mind and debauches the human heart."

He insisted that if a Bible were true, it wouldn't need to be inspired, and that "an inspired lie is not better than an uninspired one."

Ingersoll drew a sharp line between theology and reason.

He maintained that theology is not a science, relying on assertion instead of evidence and faith instead of inquiry.

In contrast, he championed observation, reason, and experience as the only reliable guides.

Religious texts, he noted, contain both wisdom and folly, gentle and cruel passages, good laws and bad, requiring discernment, not blind acceptance.

He observed that founders of religions often claimed divine authority by performing miracles and commanding spirits.

According to Ingersoll, even the most noble sentiments and virtuous lives were respected only when accompanied by supernatural feats.

Without miracles, their moral teachings were often ignored.

Ingersoll believed the public was growing tired of these old doctrines.

He saw a shift away from the solemn warnings of prophets and the rigid dogmas of sacred texts, especially as societies embraced prosperity, science, and the arts.

Ingersoll remarked that people were losing interest in the "plenary inspiration of the barbarous records of a barbarous people" and turning away from the "prophecies of evil that fall from the solemn faces of the parsons."

His views on Mohammed and Islam followed a similar pattern of critical analysis.

Ingersoll distinguished between the moral and immoral teachings of Mohammed, stating plainly: "The morality inculcated by Mohammed is good. The immorality inculcated by Mohammed is bad."

He argued that whether Mohammed was a prophet or not had no bearing on the value of his teachings, morality, he believed, is human and belongs to no religion or creed.

While acknowledging Mohammed's historical success—his victories, his unification of desert tribes, and the rise of a powerful nation—Ingersoll insisted that such achievements did not prove divine origin.

He was equally skeptical of the miracles attributed to Mohammed, noting that their evidence was no more convincing than other religious claims.

He used the Koran to illustrate how societal pressure can shape belief.

In a country like Turkey, he suggested, a person might publicly profess faith in the Koran to gain office, even if privately they found it "utterly untrue."

This, he argued, highlighted the importance of intellectual honesty over coerced belief.

Ingersoll also pointed to historical falsehoods born of religious bias.

He cited a claim by historian Matthew of Paris that Mohammed was once a cardinal who became a heretic after failing to be elected pope, and that he died from excessive drinking and was killed by swine,an account he presented as an example of how religious histories are often riddled with fabrication.

He reflected on the long-standing conflict between Christian nations and Muslims, noting that Christians often justified taking property from Muslims by force and considered it no murder to kill them.

He described the centuries-long effort to reclaim the "empty sepulchre of Christ" from the "Infidel," and how this struggle led many to lose faith in a God who had seemingly been defeated by Mohammed.

Ultimately, Ingersoll believed that religious belief, whether in Islam or any other faith—was more often a product of environment than reason.

He wrote that most intelligent men in Turkey were followers of Mohammed simply because they were "rocked in the cradle of the Koran," inheriting their beliefs as they did their physical features.

In his view, such inherited faith held no intellectual value.

5.Revolt Against Sacred Books

Robert G. Ingersoll was unwavering in his skepticism toward sacred texts, including the Bible and the Koran.

He dismissed their claims of divine origin and emphasized their human—and often barbaric—roots.

For Ingersoll, these books were not holy revelations but cultural artifacts, shaped by the prejudices, fears, and limitations of the societies that produced them.

He believed they should be treated like any other book: subject to reason, investigation, and the discernment of good from bad.

He openly rejected the notion of divine inspiration, declaring that no book could ever be proven to be inspired. The very idea, he argued:

"enslaves the human mind and debauches the human heart."

If a book is true, it doesn't need to be inspired; if it's false, inspiration cannot redeem it.

Ingersoll insisted that no communication has ever come from angels, spirits, or gods, and pointed out that even the revised versions of the Old and New Testaments had weakened public confidence in the doctrine of inspiration.

His critique of the Bible was especially fierce.

He described the Old Testament as containing :

"some truth, a great deal of error, considerable barbarism, and a most plentiful lack of good sense."

In many places, he found it "harsh, cruel, unjust, coarse, vulgar, atrocious, infamous."

Ingersoll condemned its endorsement of slavery, polygamy, wars of extermination, and religious persecution. If God truly authored these texts, Ingersoll argued, then God once occupied "the exact position the Devil is supposed to occupy now."

He found the Mosaic Code to be "exceedingly barbarous and not adapted to do justice," and criticized the commandment against graven images for stifling artistic expression.

The Jehovah of the Old Testament, he noted, violated most of his own commandments, except those concerning worship and Sabbath observance.

Stories like Creation, the Garden of Eden, and the Fall of Man, he claimed, were borrowed from older, more primitive cultures.

Ingersoll even praised the Song of Solomon as the best book in the Old Testament, precisely because it made no mention of God.

He believed Ecclesiastes was written by "an unbeliever—a philosopher—an agnostic."

In contrast, he described Joshua as "merciless as famine, as ferocious as the heart of a wild beast," and a justification for nearly every crime.

Other books, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Ezra, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, and the minor prophets, he found riddled with cruelty, absurdity, and little benefit to humanity.

Turning to the New Testament, Ingersoll noted that its books were not considered inspired until centuries after they were written.

He pointed out that "uninspired men" selected the texts deemed sacred, often amid disagreement. Even educated ministers, he said, admitted that many New Testament books were not written by their attributed authors, yet continued to uphold the dogma of inspiration.

His critique extended beyond Christianity. Ingersoll believed that all nations had their own sacred books, prophets, priests, and Christs, and that these texts reflected the peculiarities and errors of their creators. He stated plain:

"There is the same evidence in favor of the inspiration of the Koran and Bible. Both are substantiated in exactly the same way."

If one were to compare the sacred books and miracles of different religions honestly, he suggested, it would become clear that "ignorance is the mother of them all."

Ingersoll saw belief in inspired scriptures as deeply harmful. He argued that it had served as a "breastwork for nearly everything wrong," fueling persecution, war, familial hatred, poverty, and the suppression of thought and learning.

Superstition, often rooted in these texts, was in his view the greatest source of human suffering.

His recommendation was simple but radical:

treat sacred books like any other.

He urged readers to "read it as you would any other book; think of it as you would of any other; get the bandage of reverence from your eyes; drive from your heart the phantom of fear; push from the throne of your brain the cowled form of superstition."

He called for the courage and common sense to accept the good and discard the bad. In fact, he believed it would have been "far better for mankind" if the Bible had never existed.

For Ingersoll, the true sacred text, the real Bible, was not a single inspired volume, but the collective record of human achievement: facts, discoveries, inventions, poems, and noble thoughts accumulated across time.

This real Bible made no appeal to faith, ignorance, or fear. It demanded no punishment for unbelief. It simply claimed to be true—and welcomed scrutiny.

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6. The political philosophy of Robert G. Ingersoll

represents a profound integration of classical liberalism, secularism, and democratic integrity, all of which find their foundation in his "Creed of Life."

At the heart of his worldview was the conviction that human reason and individual liberty must always take precedence over religious dogma and supernatural authority.

For Ingersoll, the transition from a theological society to a democratic one was not merely a political change, but a moral evolution.

He argued that governments are founded by men rather than gods, and that true political power stems exclusively from the conscious consent of the governed.

In his defense of secularism, Ingersoll was an uncompromising advocate for the absolute separation of church and state. He maintained that a republic’s safety is found only in the supremacy of the Constitution and the secular law, famously stating that the intellectual freethinker recognizes these human-made documents as superior to any perceived "holy" book.

He viewed the introduction of religion into the political arena as one of the most significant threats to liberty, characterizing the "divine right of kings" as a historical form of spiritual and physical slavery.

To illustrate the dangers of biblical governance, he frequently cited the Puritan era as a warning to posterity, labeling it one of the most disgraceful periods of history because it attempted to substitute ancient tribal laws for modern rational justice.

Ingersoll’s brand of liberalism was defined by what he called "intellectual hospitality." He believed that true progress required every individual to have the absolute right to use their own reason without fear of social or legal retribution.

He described reason as the lamp of the mind and the only true torch of progress, insisting that it should be enthroned as the sovereign of every human brain. This concept of intellectual self-ownership was central to his philosophy; he argued that intelligence carries far more value than supposed inspiration and that each person should be the sole proprietor of their own thoughts.

Within this framework, doubt was transformed from a religious sin into a prerequisite for progress. To Ingersoll, the "infidel" was not a villain, but an intellectual discoverer clearing new paths in the vast realm of thought.

When addressing the nature of democracy, Ingersoll focused heavily on the limits of majority rule and the necessity of individual integrity. While he accepted that a majority could decide matters of law and public administration, he remained adamant that in the world of thought, every person remains an absolute monarch.

He believed that questions of logic, science, or personal taste could never be settled by a popular vote. This led him to be a fierce opponent of religious tests for public office, adopting the standard of Thomas Jefferson by asking only if a candidate was honest and capable.

Ingersoll believed that the success of a democracy depended upon the character of its citizens. He critiqued a political culture that often favored "successful hypocrites"—those who feigned religious devotion to win votes—over honest, manly unbelievers. He maintained that it was far better to be honestly beaten than to succeed through dishonesty, asserting that no man should ever sacrifice his manhood for the sake of political power.

For a democracy to truly flourish, he argued that society must move away from the "black flag of theology" and toward a religion of humanity. In this secular vision, the focus of the state is shifted from the fear of God to the active promotion of education, liberty, and the performance of good deeds for the benefit of all.

Reason as Foundation.

Ingersoll built his worldview on “reason, observation, and experience.”

He believed that beliefs should not be inherited blindly from one’s country, religion, or family, but earned through thoughtful engagement with the world. He wrote:

> *“My beliefs were forced upon me by my surroundings... I am the product of all circumstances that have in any way touched me.”*

This emphasis on intellectual honesty and personal growth formed the bedrock of his philosophy.

Rejection of the Supernatural and Orthodox Religion

- Ingersoll had “no confidence in anything pretending to be outside, or independent of, or in any manner above nature.”

- He denied the existence of the supernatural, asserting that all ideas must arise from natural experience—there can be no supernatural thought in the human brain.

- He viewed the Bible, especially the Old Testament, as a mix of truth and error, filled with barbarism and lacking common sense.

- He believed orthodox Christianity hindered civilization, citing its reliance on miracles and irrational doctrines.

- His strongest objection was to eternal punishment, which he called “abhorrent” and “an infinite absurdity,” arguing it had caused immense suffering throughout history.

- He predicted that supernatural religion would fade, replaced by humanity, science, and justice.

Focus on This World and Happiness

Ingersoll’s philosophy was rooted in the present:

“Happiness is the only good. The place to be happy is here. The time to be happy is now. The way to be happy is to make others happy.”

He rejected religions that promised joy in another world at the cost of liberty and happiness in this one.

His goal was to extract all the joy life could offer:

“To suck the orange dry, so that when death comes, nothing but the peelings will be left.”

Agnosticism Regarding God and Immortality

- Ingersoll stated:

“I do not believe in any Supreme personality or in any Supreme Being who made the universe and governs nature. I do not say that there is no such Being—I simply do not believe.”

He admitted he knew nothing about the existence of God or immortality—and believed no one else did either. He leaned toward pantheism, suggesting that if “God” meant the universe itself, then perhaps the term applied.

Regarding immortality, he saw it as a product of love, not doctrine:

“We love, therefore we wish to live.”

He hoped for another world, but preferred eternal sleep over eternal torment.

Morality and Consequences

Ingersoll believed morality was inherently human, grounded in experience, not religion.

He wrote:

“Wrong is wrong because it breeds unhappiness. Right is right because it tends to the happiness of man.”

He emphasized consequences, stating:

“Everybody must reap exactly what he sows... Responsibility goes hand in hand with freedom.”

He rejected the idea that forgiveness or redemption could erase the natural consequences of one’s actions.

Individualism and Liberty

Ingersoll championed individual effort, believing that people should be free to act as long as they did not harm others.

-He wanted minimal government, just enough to protect life, reputation, and property.

He fiercely defended intellectual liberty:

“*Every man should be guided by his reason; should be true to himself; should preserve the veracity of his soul.”*

He opposed religious tests for public office and believed religion should be kept out of politics.

Secularism as the *“Religion of This World”*

Ingersoll defined Secularism as embracing everything of real value to humanity, with well-being as its highest good.

He wrote:

> *“Secularism encourages people to think for themselves. It does not threaten punishment for thought—it rewards it.”*

Its goal was to improve this world: eliminate poverty and crime, and foster happy homes.

Progress and Civilization

Ingersoll believed humanity was improving through its own efforts.

He saw civilization as the product of free thought and intelligence, not divine intervention.

And also predicted that science would replace superstition, and that modern thought would continue drifting away from the supernatural.

In summary, Ingersoll’s philosophy is a celebration of human reason, individual liberty, and the pursuit of happiness and justice in this life. He rejected supernatural explanations and dogmatic creeds, not out of bitterness, but out of a deep love for truth, beauty, and humanity.

7. Morality Without Myth

Ingersoll’s Rejection of Religious Ethics

Robert G. Ingersoll passionately argued that morality is not inherently tied to religion, especially not to orthodox Christianity.

He believed that religion, far from being a source of moral clarity, often obstructed genuine moral progress and distorted the natural instincts of justice and compassion.

To Ingersoll, morality was a human phenomenon, not a religious one. “Morality,” he wrote, *“is not distinctively Christian or Mohammedan; it is human.”*

It does not depend on the supernatural, on sacred texts, or on creeds. Instead, it is grounded in human experience learned and refined through observation, empathy, and reason.

He defined morality as

“the best thing to do under the circumstances,”

Emphasizing that actions should be judged by their consequences: good actions lead to happiness, bad actions to unhappiness.

There is nothing mystical about it.

“Morality is simply good, common sense, going hand in hand with kindness.”

It is demonstrable, logical, and observable.

He illustrated this with examples: larceny is immoral because it undermines industry, and the family is the unit of good government; anything that destroys it is immoral.

Ingersoll was deeply critical of religion’s influence on moral reasoning.

He condemned the religious tendency to postpone consequences to an afterlife, arguing that this undermines accountability in the present.

He mocked the idea that Christianity allows people to “sin on a credit,” where a lifetime of wrongdoing can be forgiven at the last moment, while a virtuous person without a religious conversion might suffer eternal punishment.

“This credit system in morals,” he said, “breeds extravagance in sin,” whereas a “cash system,” where one reaps what one sows, promotes responsibility.

He ridiculed the notion that a murderer could ascend to heaven after repentance, while their innocent victim languishes in hell, calling it a doctrine that “sells rascality on time.”

One of his most forceful objections was to the doctrine of eternal punishment. He described it as “infinite injustice” and “eternal revenge,” a concept that hardens the heart and subverts all notions of fairness.

According to Ingersoll, this belief had caused more misery, persecution, and bloodshed than any other religious doctrine. “The idea of hell,” he declared, “is infamously absurd,” a “beastly lie” that even many clergy were becoming ashamed to preach.

He found it incomprehensible that a finite offense could warrant infinite punishment, calling it

“an infinite absurdity.”

Ingersoll also pointed to the Bible’s endorsement of slavery, polygamy, persecution, and wars of extermination as evidence of religion’s moral failings.

These acts, attributed to divine command, had built institutions like the Inquisition and justified centuries of cruelty.

He argued that religious persecution often sprang from a toxic mix of professed love for God and hatred for fellow humans.

“Religious persecution springs from a due admixture of love towards God and hatred towards man.”

The church’s history, he said, was filled with infamous acts—burning heretics, confiscating property—all carried out in the name of faith.

He scorned the doctrine of total depravity, which portrays natural human emotions like maternal love, gratitude, and pity as sinful.

This belief, he claimed, led clergymen to assume the worst about others and to preach suspicion and guilt.

“Every clergyman believes every bad thing said of everybody else.”

Ingersoll saw religion as an enemy of intellectual liberty and progress, one that discouraged inquiry and suppressed learning.

He noted that churches often emphasized artificial offenses, such as eating meat on Friday or working on Sunday, while ignoring real moral transgressions like abuse or slander.

“Those countries that are the most religious are the most immoral.”

He emphasized that morality, kindness, forgiveness, and justice are not exclusive to Christianity.

These virtues are found among Mohammedans, Buddhists, Infidels, and Atheists alike.

He believed that people might be more moral without orthodox teachings, especially when those teachings promote cruelty, inequality, or eternal punishment. He saw the world growing better—more free, more thoughtful, more intelligent, and believed this moral progress was happening independently of religion.

For Ingersoll, human happiness was the true foundation of virtue.

“Nothing is moral that does not tend to the well-being of sentient beings. Nothing is virtuous, the result of which is not a human good.”

He criticized religious institutions for hypocrisy and self-interest, accusing churches of denying rites like baptism, marriage, and burial to unbelievers, and judging morality from a business perspective.

He argued that charity belongs to humanity, not to any denomination. “Catholic charity” or “Methodist charity,” he said, “does not exist.” Hospitals built by churches, he claimed, often served institutional interests rather than pure altruism.

He portrayed ministers as out of touch with public opinion, resistant to progress, and prone to envy toward independent thinkers.

They were, in his view, guardians of outdated ideas who often attributed the basest motives to those who challenged their authority.

In summary, Ingersoll believed that morality is a natural human quality, derived from reason, experience, and the pursuit of happiness.

It does not require supernatural belief.

On the contrary, he saw orthodox religion, with its doctrines of eternal punishment, total depravity, and divine commands for cruelty, as actively undermining justice, fostering persecution, and hindering intellectual progress.

True morality, he argued, is rooted in humanity itself.

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8. Against Dogma

The Geography of Truth: Ingersoll’s Global Critique of Dogma

Robert G. Ingersoll’s philosophical project was never limited to a local dispute with the American pulpit.

To prove that religious certainty is often a product of birth rather than brilliance, he frequently utilized Islam—the religion of Mohammed—as a comparative tool.

Through this lens, he argued that what the world calls "divine inspiration" is frequently nothing more than a "geographical truth."

By examining the parallels between Islamic and Christian traditions, Ingersoll sought to expose the universal mechanisms of superstition, the suppression of art, and the ultimate fallacy of using martyrdom as evidence for truth.

Central to Ingersoll's argument was the observation that "blasphemy" is a relative term, shifting with the borders of nations.

To the rational mind, this indicates that religious "truth" is often an accident of birth. He challenged the status of "inspired" books, asserting that his own reason identified the Koran as the work of a man rather than a god..

He mocked what he called "Book Fetichism," arguing that whether a copy of the Koran or the Bible happened to stop a bullet and save a soldier's life, such an event was a matter of chance, not a proof of supernatural protection.

Ingersoll further identified religious dogma as the "assassin of art." He observed that by prohibiting the representation of human or animal life, Islamic law had effectively stifled the aesthetic progress of its followers.

He noted that while Islamic culture produced intricate designs of trees and flowers, it had failed to produce the painters or sculptors who could capture the complexity of the human face.

For Ingersoll, any system that restricted the creative reach of the human hand was a hindrance to the evolution of the human soul. He viewed this as a clear example of how theology, when given power over the "lamp of the mind," inevitably dims the light of culture.

In his debates, Ingersoll frequently dismantled the standard "evidences" of faith by showing they were used with equal fervor by all religions.

When his opponents argued that "no man dies for a lie," Ingersoll countered that thousands had died in defense of Mohammed. To him, this proved only the sincerity and bravery of the martyr—traits he considered purely human—not the truth of the creed for which they fell.

He applied the same logic to the argument of popularity, noting that if the number of books in print or the number of followers served as proof of divinity, then Islam might have been "truer" than Christianity at various points in history.

By highlighting that mothers of all faiths love their children with equal devotion, he stripped morality of its religious labels, returning it to its rightful place as a universal human trait.

While Ingersoll acknowledged that Islamic civilizations were historically advanced in the fields of medicine and charity during the Middle Ages, he did not credit the religion for this progress.

Instead, he viewed it as a period where the human spirit briefly outpaced the constraints of theology. His ultimate stance remained firm: liberty and science are the only true sources of human advancement.

To Ingersoll, Islam, like all supernatural systems, relied on a "black flag of theology" to demand a blind, unreasoning faith. He advocated instead for an "intellectual hospitality" that rejects the "pernicious superstitions" of the past in favor of a secular humanism that honors the individual above the institution.

Ingersoll's Defense of Intellectual Liberty.

Robert G. Ingersoll was a staunch opponent of religious dogma, which he viewed as one of the greatest obstacles to intellectual liberty, human progress, and justice.

His objections were sweeping and incisive, targeting not only specific doctrines but also the very nature of creeds and organized religion.

His philosophy was encapsulated in a bold declaration:

"Happiness is the only good reason, the only torch, justice the only worship, humanity the only religion, and love the only priest."

This credo stood in direct opposition to the rigid prescriptions of religious orthodoxy.

Ingersoll began lecturing because he considered the creeds of the orthodox church "false and horrible" and the Bible "cruel and absurd," driven by what he called a deep love for "intellectual liberty."

He believed that the advancement of thought and civilization was inseparable from the courage of "Infidels" and "heretics" who dared to challenge entrenched beliefs.

Among the doctrines he most vehemently opposed was the idea of eternal punishment. He called it

“the one thing that I most seriously object to in Christianity,” describing it as “infinitely infamous,” “infinitely cruel, infinitely selfish, and infinitely absurd.”

Ingersoll argued that this doctrine “subverts all ideas of justice,”

creating a moral inversion where hell is populated by honest men and heaven by “intellectual and moral paupers.”

He ridiculed the notion that people could “sin on credit,” and believed that abolishing this belief would eliminate “cant and all pretence,” “religious bigotry and persecution,” and encourage “every man to think and to express his thought.”

He traced the origins of hell to *“ignorance, brutality, cowardice, and revenge,”* and made clear his desire to “destroy the idea of eternal punishment.”

He also challenged the doctrine of salvation by faith, noting that it is absent from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and only appears later in John’s Gospel:

suggesting it was an “interpolation.” To him, it was “absurd and devilish” that salvation should hinge on “a mere intellectual conviction.”

Ingersoll rejected the idea of biblical inspiration and authority, calling the Bible “cruel and absurd” and dismissing its use as the foundation of law as “almost too silly to be seriously refuted.”

He pointed out that the God depicted in scripture endorsed slavery, polygamy, and religious intolerance, and routinely violated his own commandments.

If there were an infinite God, Ingersoll argued, divine inspiration would not resemble “a patch” or “a putting of a crack”, it would be flawless.

He observed that even educated ministers admitted to inconsistencies, unknown authorship, and interpolated passages, yet still clung to the dogma of inspiration.

About Miracles

Miracles, too, were a target of his skepticism. He found it

“just as reasonable that the deaf, dumb, blind and lame, should be cured at Lourdes as at Palestine,”

and considered modern miracle claims no more credible than ancient ones.

He remarked that it was miraculous in itself that intelligent men still believed in them, and insisted that

“The miraculous has no possible connection with the moral.”

The doctrine of original sin and total depravity, especially as formulated in Calvinism, was another object of his scorn.

He described predestination, particular redemption, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints as “five fetters for the brain,” and called these tenets “frightful, hideous, and hellish.”

Though he admitted that no Presbyterian was ever as bad as his creed, he made clear his hatred for Presbyterianism itself.

Ingersoll’s critique extended beyond doctrine to the structure of organized religion. He declared that *“organization means creed, and creed means petrifaction and tyranny,”*

and hoped that Liberalism would resist formal organization in America, favoring individuality instead.

He likened creeds to “crumbling castles,” where conservatives attempt to conceal decay, but thoughtful minds perceive the structural rot.

He believed these creeds were relics of less merciful times and tyrannical governments, portraying God as a power-hungry monarch.

He consistently described the church as an “enemy of learning” and “enemy of progress,” accusing it of promoting ignorance and suppressing scientific inquiry.

He argued that the church sought to control individuals from “cradle to grave” through rituals like christening, marriage, and funeral rites. Ingersoll believed that civilization had advanced precisely as Christianity’s influence declined.

He dedicated a volume to his wife, Eva A. Ingersoll, as “A Woman Without Superstition,” and another to his brother, Ebon C. Ingersoll, expressing contempt for “orthodox malice” and asserting that religion is “the organization of the wild beast in man.”

He did not shy away from exposing the historical crimes committed in the name of religion.

He cited the Act of Henry VIII abolishing diversity of opinion and described the church’s “black flag” flying for “more than fifty generations,” under which “every possible crime” was committed in God’s name.

He warned that if ministers held legislative power, most people would prefer to live in a “well regulated penitentiary.”

Ingersoll’s emphasis on reason, morality, and liberty was unwavering.

He stated that *“Morality is human, it belongs to no ism, and does not depend for a foundation upon the supernatural, or upon any book, or upon any creed. Morality is itself a foundation.”*

He believed that “good deeds are better than bad creeds,” and championed “absolute intellectual liberty,” urging parents to teach their children “to doubt, to investigate, to inquire.”

For him, “reasons and facts” were far more valuable than the authority of historical figures, insisting that “the living should not be awed by the mistakes of the dead.”

In summary, Ingersoll’s rejection of religious dogma was not merely rhetorical, it was a deeply principled stance against the forces that he believed perpetuated ignorance, cruelty, and injustice.

He envisioned a society built on reason, intellectual freedom, and a universal morality rooted in human happiness and kindness, not in fear, superstition, or submission to authority.

8.The Torch of Reason

Ingersoll’s Faith in Science and Education

Robert G. Ingersoll unequivocally championed science and education as the primary drivers of human progress, considering reason “the only torch” for humanity.

He firmly believed that these forces could liberate mankind from the shackles of superstition and ignorance, ushering in greater happiness and a more civilized world.

He contrasted reason with the “dead calm of ignorance and faith,” urging individuals to “think for himself” and investigate everything without reverence.

“No man should be reverent at the expense of his reason,”

he insisted, believing that “the torch that sheds the serenest and divinest light is the human reason.”

He saw science as the “savior of mankind,” destined to replace superstition. “Science is destined to take the place of superstition,” he wrote, adding that “the religion of the future will be the reason.

He even criticized Rev. T. De Witt Talmage’s for rationalize The Myth flood:

Robert G. Ingersoll used the Logic of the Dove to refute Rev. T. De Witt Talmage’s attempt to characterize the biblical flood as a local event rather than a universal one .

Ingersoll’s reasoning follows a specific logical sequence based on the behavior of the dove sent from the Ark:

The Grounding of the Ark:

Ingersoll notes that after the Ark struck bottom, Noah sent out a dove to find dry land

The Dove's Search:

According to the biblical account, the dove found no place whereon to rest her foot.

Logical Deduction of Altitude: Ingersoll argues that if the Ark had grounded in low country, as a local flood theory would suggest, then the surrounding mountains would have been out of the water

Since an ordinary mountain provides ample space for a "dove's foot," the fact that the dove found no rest proves that the Ark must have been at the “highest possible point of land.

Identifying Mount Ararat:Because Mount Ararat is approximately 17,000 feet high.

Ingersoll concludes that the Ark must have run aground on its peak; otherwise, the dove’s inability to find a resting place "means nothing"

Using the Logic to Expose Absurdity

Ingersoll uses this logical conclusion to corner Talmage into a choice between a literal miracle and scientific impossibility:

1. The Climate Problem:

If the Ark was on a 17,000-foot mountain, the passengers would be atop a glacier .

Ingersoll mocks the idea of survival at this altitude, noting that God would have had to "change the climate for that occasion" to prevent everyone from freezing .

2. The Food Problem:He sarcastically suggests that God would have had to make "all the rocks and glaciers produce wheat and corn in abundance" to feed the animals and Noah's family while they waited for the waters to recede .

3. Refuting the "Local" Theory:

Ingersoll points out that if the flood were merely "local," it would have been entirely unnecessary to take birds into the Ark at all .

He argues that birds could have simply flown away or "roosted high" to avoid a small, local rise in water .

Ingersoll uses the "Logic of the Dove" to show that Talmage's efforts to make the story reasonable actually belittle the miracles of the bible and lead to even greater logical inconsistencies.

He maintains that the moment it is reasonable, it ceases to be miraculous," and Talmage's attempts to explain it away only prove that the seeds of infidelity are germinating in the preacher's own mind

Ingersoll envisioned a world improving steadily

"through intelligence, through the development of the brain, through taking advantage of the forces of nature, through science, through chemistry, and through the arts."

He recognized an irrepressible conflict between religion and science, asserting that they "cannot peaceably occupy the same brain nor the same world."

To him, "superstition has always been the relentless enemy of science; faith has been a hater of demonstration."

Historically, he argued, the church "exerted its vast power for centuries to prevent the intellectual progress of man," treating "every science as an outcast, an enemy."

Yet he observed that *"the intelligence of the world is on the side of the Natural,"* and predicted that *"the victory of science over superstition will be complete and universal."*

Ingersoll celebrated how science had transformed human understanding. Astronomy, he said, was the "first splendid step forward!"a discipline that "shattered the lance and shivered the shield of superstition," revealing a universe "governed by law" and proving that:

"The earth is no longer flat; heaven is not immediately above us."

He noted how Luther responded to Copernicus with scripture, satisfying "orthodox ignorance."

Geologists, he wrote,

"penetrated the earth, read her history in books of stone, and found, hidden within her bosom, souvenirs of all the ages."

In chemistry, "old ideas perished in the retort of the chemist."

In medicine, he believed science would become

“the savior of mankind” by understanding the physical basis of appetites and passions, allowing control “through science.” He confidently stated, “opium will beat meditation” for pain, and placed his trust in physicians and “drugs” over the “supernatural.”

Ingersoll praised inventions such as printing, gunpowder, and the discovery of America.

He saw

“every loom, every reaper and mower, every steamboat, every locomotive, every engine, every press, every telegraph” as “a missionary of Science and an apostle of Progress.”

He credited Watt, Arkwright, Fulton, Volta, Galvani, and Morse for making lightning man’s messenger.

Among scientists, he admired Humboldt, calling him the “Shakespeare of science.”

He also named Darwin, Buckle, Draper, Haeckel, Tyndall, Spencer, Helmholtz, and Huxley as intellectual leaders whose works were read by intelligent people worldwide, while religious books “die on the shelves.”

He noted how Darwinism challenged traditional beliefs, including the doctrine of original sin.

Education, for Ingersoll, was “the most radical thing in the world.” He believed that

“nothing but education, scientific education, can benefit mankind,” and considered “

the schoolhouse as their church and the university their cathedral.”

He advocated for a robust public school system, insisting that “no religion should be taught in any school supported by public money” and that “nothing but science” should be taught.

“The public school is the intellectual bread of life,”he declared.

He supported manual training and the kindergarten system, believing people should be taught “how to do something” and “the use of their hands” to gain self-confidence and independence.

He envisioned a Sunday school where children would learn botany and entomology, connecting them with “facts in science” and what is “of use to them,” rather than “the old talk about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

Ingersoll observed that the church was “opposed to learning” and an “enemy of progress,” warning young men that “reason is a dangerous thing.”

He noted that college professors were afraid to express their true thoughts, leading students to lose confidence in creeds and begin “to do a little thinking for themselves.”

He denounced theological seminaries for discouraging investigation and thought, offering rewards “only for stupidity, for belief.” He believed the mind “necessarily resists and defies every attempt to control it by violence.”

For Ingersoll, “the world is to be reformed through intelligence, through development of the mind, not by credulity, but by investigation; not by faith in the supernatural, but by faith in the natural.”

He championed “absolute intellectual liberty,” urging that children be taught “to doubt, to investigate, to inquire,” and warning against the “serpent of superstition.”

He envisioned a future where

“humanity will take the place of what is called ‘religion.’

Science will displace superstition, and to do justice will be the ambition of man.”

In this future, “the world will then be filled with intellectual wealth” through free thought.

It would be a world where people rely on themselves, guided by knowledge and reason, leading to “happy and contented homes” and an end to poverty and crime.

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10. The Secular Sermon

Ingersoll’s Call for Human Dignity

Robert G. Ingersoll’s “Secular Sermon” is embodied in his philosophy of Secularism, which he describes as the “religion of this world.”

This philosophy is a direct call for human dignity, emphasizing reason, justice, and the pursuit of happiness in the here and now, rather than through supernatural beliefs or the fear of an afterlife.

Ingersoll’s concept of Secularism is expansive, embracing everything that holds real interest or value for the human race. He posits that “well-being is the only good,” and insists that any true value must contribute to the happiness of sentient beings.

For him, Secularism encompasses the entire sphere of human knowledge and effort.

He asserts that morality is inherently human, not specifically Christian or Mohammed an, and does not rely on supernatural foundations, sacred texts, or creeds.

“Morality is its own foundation,” he declares. Ingersoll believes in the “gospel of Intelligence” as the sole means to elevate humanity, stating that “humanity itself is the grand religion.”

Secularism, in Ingersoll’s view, demands intellectual liberty and self-reliance. It advocates for

“individual thought, investigation, observation, and the free expression of opinions.”

He encourages every person to “Stand upon your own feet. Count one! Examine yourself.”

For Ingersoll, intellectual liberty is essential to progress, and the suppression of honest thought is a threat to human development.

He consistently critiques traditional religious doctrines, especially the concept of hell and eternal punishment, which he views as barbaric, cruel, and absurd.

These doctrines, he argues, poison the minds of children and fill lives with fear and pain, standing in direct opposition to human happiness and dignity.

He believes that the “supernatural” must be abandoned for mankind to truly progress.

Justice and equality are central to his vision. Ingersoll calls for laws that ensure equal treatment for all individuals, regardless of their religious beliefs.

He insists that Christians, Jews, Deists, and Atheists should be treated identically before the law, and condemns those unwilling to grant others the same rights they claim for themselves as barbarians.

He even imagined a secular “church,” where instead of sermons on religious narratives, a gifted speaker would lecture on history, poetry, art, and the intellectual achievements of civilizations like the Greeks and Romans.

Ingersoll envisioned a Sunday school where children would learn sciences such as botany and entomology, engaging with the natural world rather than ancient myths.

He believed that music, science, and the arts were already displacing the pulpit, satisfying the “hunger of the brain” and offering joy and prosperity in the present life.

Ingersoll passionately argued that traditional churches, by promoting superstition, fear, and a fixation on an imagined afterlife, had historically hindered intellectual advancement and human happiness.

He believed that the true path to human dignity and civilization lies in embracing knowledge, justice, and the well-being of all people in this world.

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11. Breaking Chains

Ingersoll's Fight Against Tyranny and Oppression

Robert G. Ingersoll dedicated his public life to "breaking chains," relentlessly opposing tyranny and oppression in all their forms.

His crusade was rooted in a passionate belief in universal liberty, reason, and justice—a vision that spanned religion, politics, society, and the human mind.

Ingersoll viewed traditional religion, particularly orthodox Christianity, as a primary source of intellectual and social oppression.

One of his central missions was the destruction of the doctrine of hell, which he believed would eliminate religious bigotry, persecution, cant, and pretense.

Only then, he argued, could *"every man think and express his thought."*

He condemned eternal punishment as a concept that subverts justice, teaching the "infinite absurdity that a finite offence can be justly visited by eternal punishment."

He consistently depicted the church as an enemy of progress and intellectual liberty, declaring that "man advances as the church loses power."

In his view, the church had historically "carried the black flag" of persecution, with "altar and throne" supporting each other to maintain control. "Infidelity is liberty; all religion is slavery," he proclaimed. Ingersoll opposed blasphemy laws, such as those in Delaware, which imprisoned individuals for expressing honest thoughts. He lamented that "the Christ of intellectual liberty has been crucified between the pillory and the whipping-post," and insisted that intellectual conviction should never be a crime.,

To him, belief in the Bible's divine inspiration was a "breastwork for nearly everything wrong," including slavery, religious persecution, wars of extermination, and polygamy.

He saw the “holy book” as “filled with ignorance” and a source of cruelty. In one of his most vivid metaphors, he said, “we have spent millions and millions of dollars and rivers of blood to free the bodies of men; in other words, we have been freeing the cages.

My proposition now is to give a little liberty to the birds.” He declared:

“We are not forging fetters for our children, but we are breaking those our fathers made for us.”

Ingersoll’s fight extended beyond religion to political and governmental oppression. He saw slavery as a profound crime, upheld by religious texts and political doctrines like “State Sovereignty.”

He praised Abraham Lincoln for freeing millions and making the American flag “pure as the sky.”

The North’s victory in the Civil War, he believed, was not only military but intellectual, defeating the doctrine of State Sovereignty, which he called “odious,” a system of “Government without power, and citizens without protection.”

He championed civil rights for all, insisting that constitutional amendments were meant to eliminate distinctions “on account of color, race, or previous condition.”.

He condemned the Supreme Court’s ruling on the Civil Rights Bill as “monstrous,” and described the “spirit of caste” as slavery in another form.

Ingersoll argued that the federal government must protect its citizens, even against lynching, if necessary with the full force of the Army and Navy.

He admired Thomas Paine for helping to found a free nation and “enrich the air with another flag,” contrasting him with Wesley, whom he felt had done nothing for liberty.

He believed in the separation of church and state and viewed governments controlled by a few as forms of anarchy.

He wished for kings and emperors to resign and the nobility to drop their titles.

Ingersoll criticized figures like Bismarck for believing “in the sword and the bayonet—in brute force,” placing them in the “Dark Ages.” He abhorred violence as a tool of change in a republic where citizens had the ballot.

His vision of justice also encompassed social and economic conditions.

He sympathized with “laboring men of all kinds,” urging them to use their votes to repeal oppressive laws.

“Poverty has just as many votes as wealth,” he reminded Americans.

He supported Henry George and called on Republicans to “extend their hands to the sons of toil.” Ingersoll sought to abolish “class tyranny, the meanest and basest form of oppression,” and believed that privileges granted to the few should be withdrawn if they became “a curse to the many.”

He observed that in monarchies, “the idle few live on the labor and the money of others.”

Ingersoll was a staunch defender of women’s rights, especially in the context of divorce.

He opposed laws and creeds that would force an abused woman to remain with a cruel husband, and regarded marriage as the “holiest institution among men,” built on liberty, equality, and love.

He spoke out against the suffering of women and children caused by domestic abuse and the “greed of the employer” in exploiting working girls.

He also championed the liberty of children, condemning brutal treatment and religious fear-mongering.

He urged parents to treat children as equals, teaching them to doubt and investigate rather than blindly obey.

At the heart of all these battles was Ingersoll’s unwavering commitment to intellectual liberty.

He believed that every individual had the right to think and express their thoughts freely, regardless of religious or social pressure.

He saw the suppression of honest thought as “utterly subversive of all that is really valuable” and a barrier to civilization.

Reason, he insisted, was the “only torch,” and science the path to progress.

“The Age of Faith is passing away. We are living in a time of demonstration,” he declared.

He contrasted the narrowness of the pulpit with the freedom of the stage, where the oppressed could see themselves triumph.

Ingersoll defined an Infidel as someone who “has found a new fact, who has an idea of his own, and who in the mental sky has seen another star.” He saw infidels as “brave and thoughtful men,” “pioneers and heralds of the blessed day of liberty and love,” and “soldiers of liberty, the breakers of fetters, the creators of light.”

Ultimately, Ingersoll's fight against tyranny and oppression was a comprehensive crusade for human freedom, happiness, and dignity. He believed that "Liberty sustains the same Relation to Mind that Space does to Matter," and sought to liberate humanity from all forms of bondage—physical, mental, and spiritual. His vision was of a world governed by justice, intelligence, and mutual respect.

12.The Poetry of Thought

Ingersoll on Art, Beauty, and Imagination.

Robert G. Ingersoll held profound views on art, beauty, and imagination, seeing them as essential to human happiness, intellectual progress, and a richly meaningful life in this world.

Ingersoll contrasted these vital forces of creativity with the strictures of orthodox religion, arguing that true fulfillment comes from engaging with beauty and truth here and now.

Ingersoll celebrated Shakespeare as an "idealist," contrasting him with realists who

> *"take refuge in the real, hiding a lack of genius behind a pretended love of truth."*

Realism, he warned, "degrades and impoverishes," much like a wax mold is not a true work of art.

For him, the real relates to the ideal as stone does to a statue or paint to a painting—mere materials without the artist's vision.

He insisted that poetry must unite truth and beauty:

> *"Beauty is not all there is in poetry. It must contain the truth. It is not simply an oak, rude and grand, neither is it simply a vine. It is both. Around the oak of truth runs the vine of beauty."*

The artist's chief mission, whether painter, sculptor, or dramatist, is "to present truthfully and artistically," portraying life so as "to minister to it." Moral lessons, he believed, arrive most powerfully by indirection, and artistic perfection lies in harmony and proportion in every detail.

To Ingersoll, art was a soul's necessity. He noted that agnostics cultivated painting, sculpture, music, and drama as "the needs of the soul," tools to achieve happiness in this life.

He admired Dutch painters for “idealizing and rendering holy the ordinary avocations of life,” from humble cottages to mothers and children.

“The Angelus,” he said, reaches “the perfection of pathos” by showing peasants finding gratitude in simplicity.

In every form, beauty

“tends to the elevation of man.”

Imagination shone as the vital force behind poetic thought.

Henry Ward Beecher, Ingersoll observed, possessed a

“wonderfully poetic temperament,”

thinking in pictures where “logic means mental melody” and using the “ivy of imagination

” to “hide the dungeon of orthodoxy.”

Aspiring orators, he urged, should immerse themselves in great poetry and fiction, studying Shakespeare to master

“the art of expression, of compression, and all the secrets of the head and heart.”

Thought itself, he proclaimed, blossoms into perfect form:

“Thoughts are not born of chance. They grow and bud and blossom, and bear the fruit of perfect form.”

Ingersoll revered artists across every medium. Shakespeare, he proclaimed, stood as “the greatest genius of our world,” a painter and sculptor who created “the greatest pictures and statues… with words,” his “Niagara of gems spanned by Fancy’s seven-hued arch” overflowing with insight.

Robert Burns earned the title “possibly the next to the greatest” poet after Shakespeare, a painter of pictures who could transform “suffering and toil into song” and “make robes of glory out of squalid rags.”

Walt Whitman, as “the poet of democracy and individuality,” wrote the continent’s finest elegy in “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d,” and stood as the Poet of

Humanity, courageously mapping the “silent, invisible world, where feeling glows and thought flames.”

He admired Emerson’s “wonderfully good” and “beautiful lines” and praised James Whitcomb Riley as the “sweetest, strongest singer in our country” for his poems of hearth and home.

Shelley’s “Skylark” and Keats’s “St. Agnes’ Eve,” “The Grecian Urn,” and “The Nightingale” earned Ingersoll’s respect, even as he found Browning’s form lacking.

Among novelists, Victor Hugo’s Les Misérables shone with “pearls of truth” that could “fill the gutter with the glory of heaven,” while Ouida’s Ariadne stood as a “classic dream.”

Edgar Fawcett, too, merited attention as a “great poet” and “artist” whose work combined “thought, beauty and philosophy.”

Music held a special place in Ingersoll’s esteem. He hailed Wagner as the “greatest of all composers” and believed that “more real devotional feeling” rose from great music than “any sermon ever delivered.”

Alongside Shakespeare’s plays and Greek marbles, music belonged to the realm of the immortal.

In his own home, he cultivated an atmosphere rich in art and music.

The theatre, Ingersoll observed, united almost all the arts, dramatic poets, architects, painters, sculptors, and actors working together. Actors needed

“imagination, with a high order of intelligence,”

coupled with “the art of being natural.” He insisted that

“love is the eternal passion that will forever hold the stage,”

And that drama’s role was “to portray life” rather than moralize.

Ingersoll often set these artistic ideals against religious dogma.

He preferred Beethoven’s Sixth Symphony to the Five Books of Moses and found the Venus de Milo more pleasing than the Presbyterian Creed. “Shakespeare’s clowns,” he declared, “are superior to inspired writers.”

He blasted commandments against “graven images” as cultural shackles that robbed entire peoples of artistic development.

Confidence in art's forward march informed his belief that "the golden age in art is in front of us," with modern artists destined to surpass those of antiquity.

He noted that orthodoxy would condemn "all the poets," yet such condemnation only proved how deeply art and imagination embody the world he wished to see.

Ingersoll's vision reveals a deep appreciation for the human capacity to create, express, and discover beauty.

He grounded these artistic and imaginative endeavors not in supernatural promise but in earthly experience, human affection, and intellectual liberty.

Art and imagination, he believed, are crucial civilizing forces that enrich life, elevate the individual, and foster real happiness and progress in the world we inhabit.

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13. Death and the Beyond

Ingersoll's Reflections on Mortality.

Ingersoll never pretended to know what lies beyond.

"I admit that I do not know,"

he said plainly, contrasting his candor with the certainties preached by theologians.

He found no evidence in scripture, only silence, vagueness, and the echo of human longing.

"The only evidence for another life is a lack of evidence coupled with a human desire for it."

Yet even in uncertainty, he found a kind of immortality:

"I do not remember a time when I did not exist; and if, when I die, that is the end, I shall not know it… so that so far as I am concerned I am immortal."

He never denied the possibility of life after death.

"I have simply been honest. I have said: 'I do not know.'"

But he insisted that the idea of immortality was not born of dogma, it was born of love. "It was born of human affection, and it will continue to ebb and flow… as long as love kisses the lips of death.

It is the rainbow, Hope, shining upon the tears of grief." Ingersoll hoped, sincerely and without pretense, for a world where "all the broken ties of love will be united."

His fiercest words were reserved for the doctrine of eternal punishment. He saw it as the great thief of peace, the architect of fear..

"Drive the fiend of fear out of the hearts of men, women and children,"

He urged, "put out the fires of hell." To him, infinite punishment was *"infinite cruelty, endless injustice, immortal meanness."*

It "would disgrace the lowest savage," and the clergy, he said, "are ashamed to preach about sulphurous flames and undying worms."

He refused to accept a heaven that demanded indifference to suffering:

"I would rather go to hell than to go to heaven and keep the society of such an infamous tyrant."

A son rejoicing while his mother burns?

"A disgrace to human nature."

He believed this doctrine had caused "more misery than all the other doctrines in the world," driving countless minds to madness.

Instead of torment, he offered a gentler vision: "eternal sleep" or "annihilation," which he found "infinitely more consoling."

"Better that all of us should sleep the sleep of death forever than that some should suffer pain forever."

He preferred "a good, cool grave" to "the fiery furnace of Jehovah's wrath."

Ingersoll's answer to death was not speculation, it was life.

"If there is another life… the best way to prepare for it is by making somebody happy in this."

He believed that

"God certainly cannot afford to put a man in hell who has made a little heaven in this world."

He urged us to savor joy, art, music, friendship, and family—to "suck the orange dry" so that "when death comes, nothing but the peelings will be left."

His gospel was one of humanity, cheerfulness, good health, and intelligence. “Every man must reap exactly what he sows.”

To those who feared the end, he offered stories of peace. Voltaire “flowed without a murmur into the waveless sea, where life is at rest.”

” Hume passed “without a murmur,”

Spinoza with a “smile of perfect peace,” and Paine “as serenely as ever Christian passed away,” holding fast to his convictions.

These deaths, Ingersoll believed, proved that a life without orthodoxy could end without terror.

Ingersoll’s reflections on mortality are not comforting because they promise paradise.

They are comforting because they strip away fear, elevate love, and remind us that the best preparation for death is a life well lived.

If death is nothing more than sleep, then let it be peaceful.

And if there is more, let it be worthy of the love that inspired our hope.

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14. The Patriot of Liberty

Ingersoll’s American Idealism

Robert G. Ingersoll’s American idealism was rooted in his fervent belief in liberty, both of the body and, more crucially, of the mind.

Ingersoll envisioned a representative government built on justice, reason, and humanity, and saw America as a beacon of progress, striving toward a civilization where all citizens enjoy equal rights and freedoms.

He believed that liberty sustains the same relation to mind that space does to matter.

Declaring himself a Republican because he believed “in the liberty of the body,” and an Infidel because he believed “in the liberty of the mind,” Ingersoll emphasized that mental freedom was paramount.

“*There is no need of freeing cages. Let us free the birds.”*

He urged, insisting that true civilization is one in which:

> *“every man gives to every other, every right that he claims for himself.”*

Ingersoll championed individualism over socialism, advocating that each person care for themselves, and that the government should do “just as little as it can consistently with the safety of the nation,” focusing only on protecting life, reputation, and property.

He opposed government interference that would cause people to “lose manhood” and become “serfs.”

A cornerstone of his idealism was absolute intellectual liberty and free speech. Ingersoll began lecturing because he “liked intellectual liberty” and wanted to make America “intellectually free.” He celebrated the U.S. Constitution as “the first great decree... forever divorcing church and state,” calling it

“one of the grandest steps ever taken by the human race in the direction of Progress.”

He insisted that “no man shall be deprived of any civil or political right on account of his religious or irreligious opinions,” and believed that suppressing honest thought amounted to “intellectual theft and robbery.”

When the Republican victory came, he declared, “the lips of America shall be free.”

He believed it was the “undisputed duty of the Government to protect every citizen at home and abroad.”

Ingersoll opposed the doctrine of “State Sovereignty,” which he saw as “odious” and a tool for “thieving or robbery” that left citizens vulnerable. Instead, he advocated for the “supremacy of the Nation,” arguing that true patriotism meant a citizen should be able to defy their state and appeal to the nation for protection.

He also supported the protection of American labor and industries, believing it would diversify the economy, develop the “American brain,” and foster “greater and better people.”

Justice and mercy were central to Ingersoll’s vision. “Justice should not shut any door leading to truth,” he said.

He opposed capital punishment and mob rule, declaring,

“I am on the side of mercy, and if I ever make mistakes, I hope they will all be made on that side.”

He believed that “real morality is the child of intelligence,” and that actions should be judged by their consequences, not by the decrees of an “infinite master.” “Intelligence must be the savior of this world,” he proclaimed, and “Humanity is the grand religion.”

Ingersoll saw progress in the “countless influences of civilization, upon science, art, music.”

Ingersoll revered American patriots and principles. He considered

Abraham Lincoln “the greatest man ever President,” praising him for never abusing his “almost absolute power... except upon the side of mercy.”

He admired Lincoln’s unwavering commitment to saving the Union and his understanding that “liberty and slavery could not live in the same nation.

He also championed Thomas Paine, calling him a “patriot and a political philosopher,” a “revolutionist and an agitator” who helped convince Americans to separate from Great Britain and establish a representative government.

Walt Whitman, too, earned Ingersoll’s admiration as the “poet of democracy and individuality, and of liberty,” a voice worthy of the great Republic.

For Ingersoll, “the best patriot” was *“the man who wants his country to do right.”*

He was a fierce critic of anything that hindered

American progress and liberty. He condemned the religious revival system as “essentially barbaric” and harmful.

He opposed laws that discriminated against individuals based on belief, citing Delaware’s blasphemy prosecutions as a violation of personal freedom.

He viewed prohibition as an infringement on liberty, calling it a system that “breeds spies and informers.”

He also critiqued the post-Civil War South’s “prejudices born of isolation” and their hostility to free speech, asserting that the “Northern idea”. national supremacy and equal rights must prevail.

Ingersoll’s American idealism was not a passive dream, it was a call to action.

He envisioned a nation built on universal liberty, free thought, the separation of church and state, federal protection for all citizens, and the economic prosperity of American labor.

His vision was guided not by superstition or tyranny, but by justice, reason, and humanity.

15. Women, Love, and Equality.

Ingersoll's Feminist Voice

His perspectives challenged the prevailing societal and religious norms of his time, advocating for the intellectual, social, and legal liberation of women, while exalting human love and the sanctity of the home built on affection and equality.

Ingersoll was a staunch advocate for the equal rights and intellectual capabilities of women.

Rejecting the idea of female subjugation and championing their autonomy and full participation in society,he declared:

"I claim no right that I am not willing to give to my wife and daughters, and to the wives and daughters of other men,"

Adding, *"We shall never have a generation of great men until we have a generation of great women."*

He refused to accept the notion that ignorance was the foundation of virtue or that uselessness was a requisite of a lady.

"In every department where a woman has had an equal opportunity with a man, she has shown that she has equal capacity."

He insisted that "woman is naturally the equal of man" and that with opportunity and training she would produce great art, statues, and literature on par with men.

There was, he argued:

"not the slightest danger of women becoming too intellectual or knowing too much."

His "political rights are only equal to theirs," and if women wished to vote, take part in politics, or run for office, he would never interfere.

"The influence of women is always good in politics, as in everything else," he said, noting their paramount role in shaping the character of children—and thus the future of society.

He praised prominent female writers such as George Sand, George Eliot, Mrs. Browning, whom he called "marvelous" and whose poem

Mother and Poet he considered greater than anything her husband wrote—Harriet Martineau, and Ouida, recognizing them as intellectual equals or even superiors to many men.

He applauded women's efforts in "obtaining equal wages for equal work" and lamented that "Women [are] the worst Paid," calling for legal protections for working people.

He welcomed the growing desire among women to be independent and self-sufficient, remarking that

"many husbands are utterly useless, or worse," and that women felt safer knowing they could earn their own living.

Ingersoll dedicated Volume I of his works to his wife, Eva A. Ingersoll, highlighting his admiration for her intellectual independence.

He called for "equal rights, equal education, equal advantages" for women, hoping they would not remain "the serf of superstition" or "the support of the church and priest," but instead embrace progress and intellectual freedom.

An "emancipated woman," he said, is one whose "heart goes with her opinions, and goes first," and who can "never be re-enslaved." "Science must make Woman the Owner and Mistress of Herself."

He expressed deep admiration for Susan B. Anthony, calling her "one of the most remarkable women in the world," with "the enthusiasm of youth and spring, the courage and sincerity of a martyr," and affirming that

"No human being has done more for women than Miss Anthony."

When it came to love and marriage,

Ingersoll argued that genuine love must be the basis of family life, vehemently opposing forced unions and the subjugation of women within the domestic sphere.

"The grandest ambition that any man can possibly have, is to so live, and so improve himself in heart and brain, as to be worthy of the love of some splendid woman; and the grandest ambition of any girl is to make herself worthy of the love and adoration of some magnificent man."

He believed "There is no success in life without love and marriage.

You had better be the emperor of one loving and tender heart, and she the empress of yours, than to be king of the world."

For him,

“The man who has really won the love of one good woman in this world... his life has been a success.”

Love your wife more than you love God.

“*It is far more important to love your wife than to love God... You can fill her life with the perfume of perpetual joy,”*

he said.

“The holiest temple beneath the stars is a home that love has built. And the holiest altar in all the wide world is the fireside around which gather father and mother and the sweet babes.”

He professed, “I believe in the fireside. I believe in the democracy of home..

I believe in the republicanism of the family. I believe in liberty, equality and love.”

Marriage, to Ingersoll, was “the holiest institution among men,” necessary for “human advancement” and a “life worth living.” “Every good government is made up of good families. The unit of good government is the family, and anything that tends to destroy the family is perfectly devilish and infamous.”.

He condemned the idea of a “boss” in the family:

“If there is any man I detest, it is the man who thinks he is the head of a family, the man who thinks he is ‘boss!’”

No real marriage without real love.

“There is no real marriage without love, and in the marriage state there is no morality without love.

A woman who remains the wife of a man whom she despises, or does not love, corrupts her soul. “

He reminded his audience that “Marriages are made by men and women.

They are not made by the State, and they are not made by the gods.” For him, “Human happiness is the foundation of virtue, the foundation of morality.”

Against fake love.

“True love has always been as pure as the morning star,” he said, criticizing the forcing of people who despise each other to remain together.

His vision of enduring love was poetic:

“The woman you really love will never grow old to you. Through the wrinkles of time, through the mask of years, if you really love her, you will always see the face you loved and won.”

Quoting Shakespeare, he added,

“Love is not love which alters when it alters.” “Conscience is born of love,” he declared, and “No poet—not excepting Shakespeare—has had imagination enough to exaggerate the importance of human love.”

He criticized those who saw love as a duty rather than a passion, calling “celibacy” the “most obscene word in our language,” and urged men to treat their wives as “a splendid flower, and she will fill your life with perfume and with joy.”

Ingersoll’s voice on women’s rights, love, and marriage was a consistent and unapologetic extension of his broader philosophy of liberty, reason, and humanity, applied with equal force to the status of women, the sanctity of love, and the dignity of the home,

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16. The Orator’s Art

Ingersoll’s Rhetoric and Public Persuasion and Shakespeare’s comparison

Robert G. Ingersoll held a profound view of oratory, emphasizing that true public persuasion stems from substance and sincerity above all else.

For him, rhetoric was not a performance of style but a reflection of thought and conviction.

One of his most enduring statements encapsulates this philosophy:

"Behind the art of speaking must be the power to think. Without thoughts words are empty purses."

This aphorism underscores Ingersoll’s belief that effective persuasion begins with genuine intellectual content.

He advised that anyone aspiring to become a successful orator must first focus on *“having something to say, something worth saying, something that people would be glad to hear.”*

Only once the message is clear and meaningful should one consider the mechanics of delivery.

As he put it, “if you really understand what you say, emphasis, tone, and gesture will take care of themselves.”

These expressive elements, he believed, should arise organically, “from the inside, ” and remain in harmony with the speaker’s emotions.

Ingersoll described the great orator as “honest, sincere,” someone whose “brain and heart go together,” and whose every word is backed by conviction rather than artifice.

Such a speaker avoids the commonplace, paints ideas in vivid imagery, and creates a “panorama” of thought to sustain attention.

He cautioned against lengthy introductions or self-referential openings, urging speakers to :.

“commence with their subject directly, like a sculptor who begins shaping a block of stone without apology or delay.”

For Ingersoll, the orator must possess intellect, logic, and a keen sense of humor, wit, and sympathy.

He encouraged deep study of language, understanding the *“vigor and velocity of verbs and the color of adjectives”*

and cultivating imagination through immersion in great literature, especially poetry, fiction, and the works of Shakespeare.

Ingersoll admired Shakespeare’s ability to dramatize ideals and human complexity, often quoting him to illustrate the power of language to elevate thought.

He offered a sweeping definition of the orator:

“The man who thinks on his feet, who has the pose of passion, the face that thought illumines, a voice in harmony with the ideals expressed, who has logic like a column and poetry like a vine, who transfigures the common, dresses the ideals of the people in purple and fine linen, who has the art of finding the best and noblest in his hearers, and who in a thousand ways creates the climate in which the best grows and flourishes and bursts into blossom—that man is an orator, no matter of what time, of what country.”

Ingersoll’s own journey into public speaking was driven by a desire to make the country “intellectually free,” viewing his speeches as “an action in favor of liberty.”

He admired Abraham Lincoln’s oratory for its clarity, sincerity, and natural cadence, praising Lincoln’s ability to express:

“the greatest ideas in the shortest words.”

Ingersoll contrasted this with the superficiality of “elocutionists,” who focused excessively on voice and syntax at the expense of substance.

He also believed that the stage, with its power to cultivate imagination and portray ideal lives where justice triumphs, served as a potent “civilizer of man.”

Alongside music and science, he saw the theater as increasingly replacing the pulpit in satisfying the “hunger of the brain.”

For Ingersoll, oratory was not merely a tool of persuasion, it was a vehicle for enlightenment, liberty, and the elevation of human thought.

Between Ingersoll and Shakespeare

Shakespeare’s oratory is deeply rooted in Renaissance rhetoric, reflecting the education he received at Elizabethan grammar schools, where classical rhetorical principles were central.

His speeches, whether in dramatic monologues or sonnets, demonstrate a masterful use of inventio (the discovery of persuasive arguments), dispositio (the effective organization and sequencing of those arguments), and elocutio (the artful embellishment using figures of speech).

These elements combine to produce language that is both intellectually rigorous and artistically rich.

A hallmark of Shakespeare’s oratory is its musicality and powerful imagery. His lines function not only through their meanings but also as rhythmic and sonic experiences.

Through careful attention to meter, repetition, and metaphor, Shakespeare’s language resonates emotionally with audiences even before they fully grasp the literal content.

Consider Mark Antony’s funeral oration in Julius Caesar:

“Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;

I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.”

The speech’s cadence and rhetorical irony build tension and sympathy, transforming public grief into political persuasion.

Shakespeare’s oratory is also distinguished by its use of multiple voices.

His persuasive speeches are embedded within character, kings, lovers, villains, and fools, each speaking with a distinctive cadence, personality, and worldview.

This multiplicity allows Shakespeare to explore a wide range of human experience and rhetorical strategies King Henry V's rousing speech before the Battle of Agincourt, for example, channels martial valor and national pride:

"We few, we happy few, we are a band of brothers."

Here, Shakespeare fuses poetic elevation with emotional intimacy, forging unity through language.

Moreover, Shakespeare skillfully blends the public and private realms of oration.

He can elevate public speeches with grandeur and authority, yet also transform inward soliloquies into intimate conversations that feel like personal appeals to the soul.

Hamlet's "To be or not to be" soliloquy exemplifies this duality, an existential meditation delivered as if directly to the audience's conscience.

In contrast, Robert Ingersoll's oratory takes a distinctly different shape. Unlike Shakespeare's speeches, which are mediated through fictional characters and dramatic contexts, Ingersoll spoke directly and personally to his audience.

His oratory was a contract with the listener—clear, immediate, and authentic—giving the sense that he was speaking to each individual in the present moment.

Ingersoll favored plain speech elevated by poetic flourishes, humor, and strong moral conviction.

His language was accessible but never simplistic, skillfully using vivid metaphors and memorable turns of phrase that illuminated his ideas without obscuring them in complexity.

In his tribute to his brother, he wrote:

"He was a brave man. He was a kind man. He was a just man. He was a man."

The repetition is stark, the sentiment unadorned, yet the emotional weight is profound.

A defining feature of Ingersoll's oratory was his moral and intellectual boldness.

He did not shy away from controversial subjects,especially religion, science, and politics.

He grounded his arguments in logic, using reason as the backbone of his discourse, while employing emotional appeal to engage and inspire. In his defense of free thought, he declared:

"The more liberty we give the people, the more liberty they will give to others."

This aphoristic clarity made his speeches both intellectually convincing and emotionally stirring.

Ingersoll was also a consummate performer.

He mastered pacing, well-timed pauses, and vocal modulation to build momentum and heighten dramatic effect.

His delivery transformed speeches into dynamic and compelling experiences that felt revelatory rather than didactic, drawing listeners deeply into his worldview.

In Summary, Shakespeare's oratory and Ingersoll's represent two distinct traditions and purposes of speech:

Shakespeare's oratory is like a cathedral, complex, richly ornamented, and multi-layered, meant to inspire awe and contemplation across generations through its dramatic multiplicity and linguistic artistry.

Ingersoll's oratory is like a lightning strike, direct in its impact, singular in voice, and fiercely focused on persuading and moving the listener immediately and powerfully.

This contrast highlights how oratory can operate differently depending on context, audience, and intent, with Shakespeare emphasizing the theatrical and imaginative, and Ingersoll the personal and immediate.

16 : Why Marx Attacked the American "Idealistic" Atheists

The Clash of Philosophies: Active vs. Passive Atheism

Karl Marx's critique of Robert G. Ingersoll—and his earlier criticism of Ludwig Feuerbach—was rooted in a fundamental disagreement over the purpose of reason.

Ingersoll's "Passive" Atheism: For Ingersoll, atheism was a tool for Individual Enlightenment. It was meant to free the mind from fear so the individual could enjoy a "Religion of Life," family, and success.

Marx's "Active" Atheism: For Marx, atheism was merely a pre-condition for Revolution. He believed that once you stop looking to Heaven for help, you must immediately start tearing down the economic structures of Earth.

The "Illogical" Hate: Why Marx Lost His Rigor

Marx’s attacks on the American "Idealists" often drifted into the illogical. While he claimed to be a man of pure science and "Materialism," his hatred for Ingersoll’s popularity led him to ignore the very "Naturalism" he claimed to follow.

The Error of Envy: Marx was frustrated that Ingersoll’s "Liberal League" and secular movement were peaceful and prosperous.

He couldn't logically explain why a "bourgeois" atheist was more loved by the common people than his own "proletarian" movement.

The "Professional" Smear: By calling Ingersoll a "Professional Atheist," Marx committed a logical fallacy—an ad hominem attack. He attacked Ingersoll’s income and career because he could not successfully defeat Ingersoll’s Logic of Happiness.

The Fear of Competition: The Organization Conflict

Marx did not want the secular movement in America to join hands with the "Idealists." He feared that if the working class adopted the "Religion of Life," they would become "too happy" to revolt. He wanted them angry; Ingersoll wanted them educated.

Marx respected the intellect of the Idealists (like Feuerbach), but he hated their peacefulness. He viewed their "Passive Atheism" as a form of "Secular Opium"—something that made people feel better without changing the political system.

While Marx saw a "Professional Atheist," Ingersoll saw a "Proprietor of the Soul." Here is how he dismantled the Marxist critique:

The "Hearth" vs. The "State"

Ingersoll’s most powerful rebuttal was his focus on the Home. Marx wanted to organize the world into "Classes" and "Labor Unions." Ingersoll argued that the only "Sacred" unit was the family.

The Reply: "I am the owner of myself... I will not be a cog in a machine, even a secular one."

He argued that if you take away a man’s right to be "Professional"—to succeed, to own property, and to be happy—you are just creating a "New Religion" where the Government is the God.

The Rebuttal to "Active" Atheism

Marxists accused him of being "Passive" because he didn't call for the burning of factories. Ingersoll replied by redefining what "Action" meant.

The Reply: He argued that the most "Active" thing a human can do is to think.

"The brain is the only weapon." He believed that if you change a man's mind through reason, the world changes naturally. If you change the world through violence (the Marxist way), you just end up with "Reason in chains."

The "Success" Defense (The Slap to Jealousy)

Ingersoll never apologized for his $2,000 lecture fees or his fine suits. He used his success as a Logical Proof.

The Reply: He often suggested that a philosophy that makes you miserable, poor, and angry (like the "Gloom" of the Materialists) cannot be the "Truth."

He called his path the "Gospel of Cheerfulness." By being a "Professional," he proved that Reason + Work = Prosperity. To him, Marx's "Hate" was proof that the Materialist path was a "Philosophy of Failure."

Marxism is a philosophy born of the 'Sigh.' It requires the worker to be miserable to be revolutionary. Ingersoll's greatest 'crime' in the eyes of Marx was a happy, The Divergent Paths: Rebellion vs. Enlightenment

The fundamental difference between Karl Marx and Robert G. Ingersoll lies in their objective for humanity.

Marx's path was one of universal rebellion. Though he was a secular thinker, his critique was so total that he often attacked fellow atheists if their logic did not serve his specific revolutionary goals.

For Marx, the "system" was the enemy, and he believed that the only way to save the individual was to first overthrow the regime through collective struggle.

His atheism was a tool for political combat, often leading to an exclusionary and aggressive stance toward dissent.

Ingersoll's path was one of profound affection. He truly loved his people and sought to empower them within the lives they were already leading.

He did not seek to topple regimes or initiate a fight with those who disagreed with him. Instead, he practiced a "Positive Atheism"—an invitation to the "Religion of Life."

His goal was not to change the government, but to change the mind by encouraging every person to think for themselves. He believed that a society of free-thinking individuals would naturally become a society of free people, without the need for a violent revolution, successful, and 'Professional' advocate for humanity.

Marx's attacks were not scientific; they were the reactions of a man who saw his 'Revolution' being replaced by a 'Religion of Life' that actually worked.

17: Legacy of Robert G. Ingersoll

Robert G. Ingersoll left behind a rich and multifaceted legacy, remembered foremost for his passionate advocacy of freethought, reason, and humanism.

As a public orator, philosopher, and commentator on political and social issues, his influence extended far beyond his own era, shaping conversations around religion, morality, and civic life.

Champion of Freethought and Critic of Religious Orthodoxy

Ingersoll’s most enduring legacy lies in his fearless challenge to religious dogma. Over fifteen years, he delivered hundreds of lectures aimed at liberating minds from fear and superstition. He sought to “drive the fiend of fear out of the hearts of men, women, and children” and “put out the fires of hell.”

His goal was to dismantle the doctrine of eternal punishment, believing that its destruction would eliminate religious bigotry and allow every individual the freedom to think and speak openly.

He was widely recognized as a “great Agnostic” and a vocal opponent of intolerance. Ingersoll believed that the idea of divine inspiration “enslaves the human mind and debauches the human heart,” and that supernatural religion had “outlived its

usefulness.” In the age of scientific discovery, he argued, “the creeds are growing laughable,” and “a theologian is an intellectual mummy.”

His mission was to “civilize the church and humanize the people,” pushing society toward enlightenment. He insisted that a “decent God” would never punish an honest person for their best guess. Though he expressed strong disdain for Presbyterianism, he made a clear distinction between the creed and its followers, condemning Calvinist doctrines that portrayed most of humanity as damned—and celebrated it.

Ingersoll envisioned a future free from the ghosts and monsters of superstition, where justice alone would remain.

Philosopher of Humanism, Reason, and Practical Morality

Ingersoll’s philosophy was grounded in humanism and reason.

He believed that happiness was the highest good, reason the guiding light, justice the truest form of worship, humanity the only religion, and love the purest priest.

For him, morality was not the product of divine command but a human construct, independent of any creed or sacred text.

He argued that “real morality is the child of intelligence,” and that actions should be judged by their consequences, not by obedience to an “infinite master.”

Progress, he believed, would come not from emotional conversions or religious reformation, but from understanding the conditions that produce good, honest, intelligent individuals.

Ingersoll encouraged living in the present: “Do not regret having lost yesterday; do not fear that you will lose tomorrow; enjoy today.” He promoted the love of home and family as the foundation of true temperance, contrasting it with the failures of prohibition.

He admired figures like Professor Swing, who spread “light and liberty to the souls of men,” and emphasized that goodness transcends race and religion.

Accomplished Orator and Public Figure

Renowned for his eloquence, Ingersoll was hailed as a “marvelous orator” and “one of the greatest men of his age.” His speeches were celebrated for their brilliance and clarity, delivered in a voice described as “deep, uncommonly musical,” with a style that was decisive, natural, and vivid.

He believed that true oratory should be simple and sincere, asserting that “the greatest ideas should be expressed in the shortest words.”

Influential Political and Social Commentator

Politically, Ingersoll was a committed Republican who championed the protection of American labor and industry.

He believed that a diverse economy fostered intellectual growth and national prosperity.

He supported individual independence and limited government, while also advocating for social responsibility, arguing that the fortunate should be taxed to support the unemployed until work could be found.

He opposed prohibition and Sunday laws, viewing them as infringements on personal liberty. He condemned mob justice and insisted on legal due process. Ingersoll was a strong voice for civil rights, celebrating the triumph of federal authority in protecting citizens and rejecting state sovereignty when it failed to do so.

He called on large corporations to care for their aging workers, criticizing the practice of discarding them “like old clothes.” As an expansionist, he supported U.S. acquisition of territories like the West Indies and the Philippines—but only through fair means and with the consent of the people, emphasizing that such decisions should be guided by “right and wrong,” not convenience.

Embodiment of Personal Integrity and Family Values

Ingersoll was admired for his intellectual honesty and courage—qualities acknowledged even by his critics. He modeled a loving family life, cherishing his wife and daughters, and upholding the sanctity of home and marriage as pillars of civilization. He once said, “The woman you love will never grow old,” reflecting his deep affection and romantic idealism.

He was described as a “manly man,” a wise counselor with humane instincts and a capacious mind. His personal motto was to “suck the orange dry,” extracting every drop of joy from life so that “when death comes, nothing but the peelings will be left.”

In Summary

Robert G. Ingersoll’s legacy is that of a brilliant orator and fearless intellectual who challenged the dominant religious and social conventions of his time. He envisioned a society built not on fear or dogma, but on reason, liberty, and the practical pursuit of human happiness. His voice continues to echo in the ongoing struggle for free thought and moral clarity.

Voices of Admiration: What Writers and Thinkers Said About Ingersoll

Robert G. Ingersoll’s legacy was not only shaped by his own words, but also by the admiration of some of the most brilliant minds of his time—and beyond. Their reflections underscore the breadth of his influence and the depth of his character.

Mark Twain, himself a master of wit and language, called Ingersoll “a master of words” and “one of the greatest men this country has ever produced.” Twain’s praise speaks to Ingersoll’s unmatched eloquence and his towering presence in American intellectual life.

Thomas Edison, the great inventor, recognized Ingersoll’s forward-thinking spirit, remarking that “Ingersoll’s ideas were ahead of his time.

He helped set mankind free.” Edison’s tribute highlights the liberating power of Ingersoll’s freethought philosophy.

Walt Whitman, the poet of democracy and the human soul, described him as “a man full of the western genius and audacity.” This captures Ingersoll’s boldness and his embodiment of the pioneering American spirit.

Frederick Douglass, the great abolitionist and orator, placed Ingersoll “among the great teachers of morality and truth.” Coming from a man who fought for justice and equality, this is a profound endorsement of Ingersoll’s ethical vision.

Oscar Wilde, known for his sharp intellect and literary brilliance, called Ingersoll “the most intelligent man in America.” Wilde’s admiration reflects the international reach of Ingersoll’s reputation.

In more recent times, Susan Jacoby, a leading voice in secular thought, has emphasized Ingersoll's vital role in American freethought and his courageous critiques of religion. Her work has helped revive interest in Ingersoll's writings and ideas, showing their continued relevance in modern discourse

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Note to the Reader

This book was born from a deep admiration for the eloquence, courage, and humanity of Robert G. Ingersoll

The reflections and commentary within are drawn primarily from his full-length lectures and publicly available resources, including Wikipedia and archival speeches. While this is not a scholarly edition, it is a heartfelt tribute—a modern lens on a timeless voice.

Ingersoll's words speak for themselves: they are rich with moral clarity, poetic insight, and a profound belief in the goodness of humanity. My hope is that this book serves as both an introduction and an invitation—to explore further, to question boldly, and to embrace a worldview where love and reason walk hand in hand.

If you find yourself moved by Ingersoll's idealism, I encourage you to continue the journey. His legacy is vast, and his relevance endures.

Suggested Reading & Resources

To deepen your understanding of Ingersoll's life, philosophy, and impact, here are some recommended readings and resources.

1- The Works of Robert G. Ingersoll (12-volume collection) available on archive.org

Available in public domain archives, this comprehensive set includes his lectures, essays, and interviews. A treasure trove for anyone seeking the full scope of his thought

2 - Six interviews with Robert G. Ingersoll on Six Sermons by the Rev. T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.which also includes A Talmagian Catechism published 1882. Also in the public domain

2 - Bradlaugh contra Marx: Radicalism versus Socialism in the First International

by Deborah Lavin

Other links:

The Secular Web (infidels.org)

A rich online archive of freethought literature, including many of Ingersoll's speeches and writings.

- Wikipedia: Robert G. Ingersoll

A helpful overview of his biography, major works, and influence, with links to additional resources and citations.

Whether you are a skeptic, a seeker, or simply someone who values truth and compassion, Ingersoll's voice offers a timeless reminder: that we can reject superstition without rejecting love, and that the light of reason shines brightest when guided by the warmth of the heart.

Let his words inspire you to think freely, live kindly, and speak bravely.

Robert G. Ingersoll: Religion of Life

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